Collective Firms between Collective and Company

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Abstract

This thesis wants to understand how alternative firms deal with the complexity of balancing different rationalities in their intraorganizational coordination, in the absence of formal hierarchies. In a comparative case study of three small, democratically governed collective firms, the relationship between coordination and morality is analyzed. The majority of research on collective firms focuses on democratic governance structures, which risks to underestimate the importance of coordination that is based on intimate knowledge and personal relations. This is especially important to understand collective firms, which are dependent on lateral accountability and cooperation between their members. Consequently, this work is informed by the work of Laurent Thévenot which allows to understand coordination based on different levels of generalization.

The results of this thesis contribute to three different areas of research:

First, contributions are made to the field of valuation studies, by further developing insights on the notion of the test. The thesis also points out the central role of legitimate principles of difference and equivalence for successful commensuration, and the tension between particularity and generalization in standardizing evaluation devices.

Second, the study contributes insights for scholarship on coordination and morality in organizations. It demonstrates that considering coordination based on different degrees of generality yields important insights on intraorganizational coordination.

Finally, this study contributes to scholarship on cooperatives and collectivist organizations. The often noted duality of collective firms is reframed as the need to balance and mediate different modes of coordination. The study develops a heuristic concept, the composite relation, which explains how collectives are held together despite their central tension between particular and collective goods.

Introduction

Organization theory is a wide field with diverging views on the subject of interest, but in general organizations are viewed as as social entities with a formal structure, purposefully created and recreated by actors in order to achieve specific goals (Scott, 2004) or with an emphasis on the possibility of conflicting interests, they are seen as “systems of coordinated action among individuals and groups whose preferences, information, interests, or knowledge differ“ (March and Simon, 1993: 2). A crucial question for organization theory follows from this: How do organizations achieve the coordination of individuals with diverging information and interest in order to achieve specific goals? In organization studies, some variation of bureaucratic or formal hierarchy is usually assumed as the fundamental basis of governance and coordination (Ahrne and Brunsson, 2011). Bureaucracies are effective in supporting ongoing coordination because their hierarchical structures reduce the potential for open conflict between individuals, objectives or values. Formal hierarchies ensure, that ultimately a person, or a group of people “on the top” are able to define the common interest and delegitimize anything that can be deemed as particular, individual or egoistic from this point of view.

While organizational scholarship in general can be characterized by a “relative neglect of 'actually existing‘ alternatives” (Reedy, 2014: 640), this study is interested in how alternative firms deal with the complexity of coordinating and balancing different people, as well as rationalities in the absence of formal hierarchies. How does an organization without formal hierarchies handle uncertainty in the face of new situations, where multiple different rationalities and evaluative logics could be applied? How does such an organization resolve conflicts between people and/or rationalities? This study analyses the relationship between coordination, evaluation and morality in three small, democratically governed collective firms. The cases were selected based on the firms using collective, democratic governance structures, not on the legal form of the

cooperative. This understanding of collective firm mirrors Rothschild and Whitt's definition of a collective or a cooperative as "any enterprise in which control rests ultimately and overwhelmingly with the member-employees-owners, regardless of the particular legal framework through which this is achieved" (1989: 2).

The fundamental basis of governance and coordination in alternative organizations is always some form of organizational democracy. The literature on democratic organizations is still influenced by the 'iron fist of oligarchy' (Michels, 1957), the idea, that every complex organization will over time unavoidably develop into an oligarchy. This is assumed to happen, because complex organizations need a division of labour, and thus specialization. From specialization follows the development of hierarchies and ultimately, an elite of experts emerge. Another related specter that still haunts scholarship on democratic organizations is the 'degeneration thesis' (Cornforth, 1995), which specifically targets democratic worker cooperatives. The degeneration thesis posits that worker cooperatives, over time, will degenerate from a collective which uses direct democracy to a conventional managerial hierarchy. It is argued this is happening, because in order to fulfill their role as an economic enterprise, cooperatives will start to use more and more formalization. The 'degeneration thesis' has its origin in Marxist and socialist critiques of worker cooperatives. Here, the cause for 'degeneration' are external forces, the capitalist relations of production. The need to survive in a competitive market forces worker cooperatives to seek profit, and, over time, they lose their radical ideas and start to adopt the same structures as every other capitalist firm. The 'degeneration thesis' also has non-Marxist proponents, which, referring to Michels, locate the reason for the failure to maintain democratic structures in problems of intraorganizational coordination (Cornforth, 1995: 489 – 492).

A "preoccupation with failure" (Stryjan, 1994: 62) has contributed to a lot of research on collective firms that directly aims to refute the degeneration thesis (Cornforth, 1995; Langmead, 2016; Storey et al., 2014). While scholars seem to

agree, that governance based on direct democracy is unrealistic in larger organizations, they highlight that not every form of formal hierarchy means that an organization is governed by an elite of oligarchs, as there are many possible forms of democratic governance (Putterman, 1984; Cornforth, 1995; Meira, 2014). Michel's idea that division of labour is incompatible with sustaining equality and democracy in a collective heavily influenced 1960s and 1970s counter culture and their alternative organizations (Freeman, 1972; Levine, 1975; Neumann, 2008; Rothschild-Whitt, 1976; Rothschild and Whitt 1989). Consequently, job rotation is often used as an anti-dote to degeneration (Kokkinidis, 2015; Rothschild-Whitt, 1976; Sobering, 2019). However, research has shown that specialization and division of labour is not necessarily undermining democracy (Hunt 1992; Cornforth 1995).[1]

There is ample theoretical and empirical work on collective firms that lays out conditions, possibilities and facilitating factors that make democracy in economic organizations possible (Bernstein, 1976; Chakrabarti and Varman, 2004; Cheney et al., 2014; Cornforth, 1995; Johnson, 2006; Kokkinidis, 2015; Reedy, 2014; Rothschild, 2016; Rothschild-Whitt, 1976; Sauser, 2009; Spear, 2004; Stryjan 1994). Jaumier (2017: 219) summarizes factors the literature describes as facilitating ongoing democracy and equality as (1) relating to environment and size – for instance small-size and niche-markets, and (2) rules and procedures that support democratic practices – among the most common democratic decision-making.

This thesis is interested in intraorganizational coordination, which is, however, not limited to rules and procedures. The majority of research on collective firms focuses on the design and maintenance of democratic governance structures, to

1 Division of labour and specialization has never been an issue for the collective firms I've analyzed in this study. Like all firms, they may at times face coordinative problems due to a division of labour, but specialized knowledge and skills of members is not seen as a danger to their collective governance per se. Division of labour is specifically discussed in Pohler 2020b.

the detriment of an analysis of everyday experiences and practices and how relationship dynamics on the ground contribute towards organizational dynamics (Jaumier, 2017; Langmead, 2016; Resch and Steyaert, 2020; Stryjan, 1994). According to Stryjan, a democratic firm is “run and shaped by what its members do in the course of their daily interactions with their organization as much as by what they say at formal assemblies” (Stryjan, 1994: 66). A focus on the formal characteristics of organizational democracy risks to underestimate the importance of coordination between people and their social-material environment that is not based on formal rules, but on intimate knowledge and personal relations. Consequently, this work uses central ideas from the economy of conventions (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005; Diaz-Bone, 2011), a theoretical approach that allows to understand coordination based on different levels of generalization.

The economy of conventions furthermore allows to reconsider the prevalent notion of collective firms as characterized by a duality of being a social and an economic organization (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014; Meira, 2014; Langmead, 2016; Styjan, 1994). This duality is usually understood in two main ways: On one hand, echoing the degeneration thesis, it is seen as one between idealism and pragmatism (Ashforth and Reingen, 2014), whereby “pragmatism” refers to an economic rationale. In another variant, this duality is described as one between formal, impersonal structures, and informal, personal relations. For instance, Meira (2014) describes “Omega”, a worker-coop, as an organization that exists in a tension “between structure and anti-structure”, since “the coercive mechanisms implied in institutions and technology will meet the brotherhood of cooperators in an ongoing challenging contradictory process.” (Meira, 2014: 726).

While collective firms certainly comprise informal, as well as formal structures and they “conceive(s) social and economic goals as interdependent” (Langmead, 2016:80), thinking in these dualities risks to overlook the actual complexity that is at play. According to Boltanski and Thévenot’s “On Justification” (2006), one of the central works following the economy of conventions perspective, “the social” as

well as “the economy” always already comprise compositions of different values and related rationalities.

The main research interest of this thesis is what it means to be a collective and a company at the same time and which coordinative tensions ensue from this. The starting point of the analysis is, however, not to look at tensions between formal and informal structures, or social and economic values. An economy of conventions perspective posits ‘complexity’ (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005), an intermingling of multiple values, where others often conceive ‘duality’. Taking guidance from the economy of conventions and French pragmatic sociology, this thesis starts with the problem of coordination in the presence of multiple and at times conflicting rationalities. According to Thévenot, coordination is not just a “lawlike process mainly determined by forces, constraints, rules, dispositions, habitus, and all the rest”, instead, coordination has “undetermined, dynamic and creative aspects” which arise “from the operations of evaluation, which actors depend on for the conduct of their action and their selective access to reality” (2002: 57). From this perspective, coordination is always seen as related to evaluation and thus, ultimately, morality.

The existing literature on collective firms is mainly focused on the achievement of democratic governance and often relies on conceptions of a foundational ‘duality’. This study contributes to this literature by broadening the perspective on the relationship between coordination and normative ideas. The research wants to understand which coordinative and evaluative tensions exist inside collective firms and how they are mediated or resolved. This interest is informed by the theoretical work of the economy of conventions in general and in particular, by the work of Laurent Thévenot (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006; Thévenot, 1984; Thévenot, 2001b).

The theoretical concepts this study uses are explained in detail in the articles of this thesis. However, in the following I will give a short overview of the central

concepts, since this is necessary to understand how the research aims and design have been developed. Therefore, I will shortly introduce the economy of conventions, Boltanski and Thévenot‘s pragmatic sociology of critique and Thévenot‘s sociology of engagements. Next, two different research perspectives on organizations that these frameworks afford are distinguished. Based on this, I will discuss the current state of research in the academic literature. Subsequently the research aims and questions, as well as the research design and methodology will be introduced.

The Economy of Conventions

The economy of conventions (henceforth EC) is an interdisciplinary research programme in the social sciences, that emerged in France in the 1980ies (Desrosieres, 2011). With the aim of developing a counter-paradigm towards standard economic theory, the programme incorporates three issues that are usually separated in economic thinking: “the characterization of the agent and his/her reasons for acting; the modalities of the coordination of actions; and the role of values and common goods" (Eymard-Duvernay et al.,2005: paragraph 1). A leading questions is how uncertainty in coordination can be resolved by actors that are capable of not just a calculative, but an interpretative rationality: “In the centre of interest, (...), we find the situation in its temporality, the individual’s uncertainty about the identification of the situation and the interpretative effort that is required to determine, together with others, the situation as a shared and common one.” (Wagner, 1994: 274). For the EC the achievement of coordination is not something that can be taken for granted, but has to be explained, since: “In its ordinary singularity, any coordination is uncertain in so far as it brings into play heterogeneous actors, takes place over time, and focuses on a product (or service) that is never entirely predefined.” (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005: paragraph 18). This uncertainty can be resolved by using conventions. Conventions are cognitive or interpretative frames which help to coordinate as well as evaluate practices: “Conventions channel uncertainty on the basis of a common

form of evaluation that qualifies objects for coordination." (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005: paragraph 20). Each mode of coordination is based on and determined by conventions, that is, specific cognitive and evaluative forms. The central idea of the EC is that coordination is accomplished through the use of evaluation principles. "Evaluation is at the centre of coordination; it is not an argument, among others, of the individual function of utility, an invisible bedrock sub-contracted for analysis to other disciplines of the individual function of utility, or a value added to rationality to complete or correct it." (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005: paragraph 22).

The EC assumes a plurality of available cognitive and evaluative formats - or conventions - that can be used for coordination. One of the central works coming from this perspective is Boltanski and Thévenot's "On Justification" (2006, henceforth OJ), in which they develop a model of the structure of the most legitimate conventions, based on different ideas of a common good.

On Justification and the Economies of Worth Framework

In OJ, Boltanski and Thévenot describe the most legitimate conventions in contemporary societies, which set up just 'orders of worth' since they allow to combine a principle of a common humanity with meritocracy. People can acquire different states of worth according to their contribution to a common good. These orders of worth are repertoires of justification based on a central principle of equivalence, that people with critical capacities can mobilize in different situations for critique or justification. The moral economy of the orders of worth is extended towards 'common worlds', which house specific objects and subjects that have meaning and worth. This extension towards 'worlds' is necessary to understand how critique and justification is pragmatically enacted.

OJ distinguishes six different worlds[2]: The world of the market, in which a competitive market is valued, and which is populated by merchants, customers and market goods. In the industrial world technical efficiency is valued, and important people and objects are engineers, experts, methods and infrastructures. The civic world values collective interest, and therefore citizens and unions, rules, rights and welfare policies. In the world of fame, celebrities have the highest state of worth and acquire this through media. The domestic world relates worth to reputation, a relational order of people is based on heritage and history. In the inspired world, the worthiest people are artists and inspired people, which are characterized by grace, nonconformity and creativity. All of these worlds can be the basis of coordination. If the market world is of high importance in an organization, than coordination and decision will tend to rationalize in regards to market expansion and good salesmen will have a high status. If the industrial world is of high importance, coordination and decision will tend to optimize product quality and consequently, technical expertise will have a high status.

The theoretical framework in OJ has been developed to support a pragmatic sociology of critique, which is able explain how people deal with a multiplicity of legitimate common goods in situations, in which there is a controversy over the worth of the involved people and objects. Based on the common worlds, Boltanski and Thévenot distinguish two kinds of critique: The first kind is an internal or reformative critique, when an arrangement or a situation is criticized because its supposed order is faulty. There are three possibilities of internal critique. First, it can be criticized that an object which is necessary for a correct test in a world is missing, or that an object that is important is not functioning properly. For instance, someone argues that a competition between two runners is not fair, because one of the runners has inferior running-shoes. A second critique can claim that someone has been unjustly overvalued due to aspects or characteristics that are

2 The six worlds have been extended by Thévenot, Moody, and Lafaye (2000) with the green world and Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) with the project world. Since these worlds did not appear empirically relevant in my case studies, I won‘t discuss them here.

not relevant. Someone might criticize a job interview (industrial world) in which the interviewer takes into consideration aspects of the applicant that are not “of relevance”, i.e. attributes that have no worth in the industrial world, like expensive clothes, family background etc. Boltanski and Thévenot (2006: 220) call this a “transport of worth” from one world to another. A third possibility is a “transport of deficiency” from one world to another, for instance, if an applicant is not accepted because one of the interviewer’s friends does not like her.

The second kind of critique that is distinguished in OJ is the external, or radical critique. It criticizes one order of worth from the standpoint of another order of worth. Boltanski and Thévenot call the resulting situation a 'clash of worlds' (2006: 223) “if a customer waiting in the line at the post office were to claim the right to go straight to the window because he is wealthy, he would be denouncing the validity of justice on which public service relies” (2006: 224).

A critique can lead to a critical moment, in which people, who are doing things together and have to coordinate their actions, realize that “that something is going wrong; that they cannot get along any more; that something has to change.”(Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 359). According to Boltanski and Thévenot, “One can make a link between very different stories if one accepts the idea that justified disputes are always grounded on the disagreement whose object is the relative size or worth of the different beings present in the situation.“ (1999: 363).

In order to solve a disagreement, a test can be set up, in which actors are trying to come to a justified evaluation of worth of subjects and objects involved in a situation. Such a test can only be set up if actors agree on a higher evaluation principle on which the test is based on. The test then has to be conducted in a way, that it is “cleaned” of elements from other worlds, a “pure” test only takes into consideration elements from one world (2006: 138). These tests are conditioned

and supported by the involved people making use of objects in the situation that help to legitimize their arguments.

If participants are unable to settle on one world, they can work out a compromise, resulting in a composite arrangement. Composite arrangements are situated between orders of worth: “We use the term ‘compromise’ in a specific way to designate the kind of composition between orders of worth (and not only between particular interests) which suspends controversy, without having resolved it by recourse to a test in a single order of worth” (Thévenot, 2001a: 411). In composite arrangements, people are able to establish a compromise between different conceptions of justice and therefore avoid a clash. These compromises are made more stable by the creation of objects composed of elements stemming from different worlds which are endowed with their own identity “in such a way that their form will no longer be recognizable if one of the disparate elements of which they are formed is removed” (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006: 278). An example is that of worker's rights, which associate : “[…] an object from the civic world (rights) with beings from the industrial world (workers). This grouping is inherent in the union movement, and more broadly in all arrangements with which the term 'labor' can be associated […]” (2006: 278).

There is a third possibility to solve a conflict, a private agreement. Private here refers to “something that ignores the common good, implies benefits only to the parties involved, and does not aim at justification” (2006: 337). A private arrangement, then is “a contingent agreement between two parties that refers to their mutual satisfaction rather than to a general good” (2006: 336).

Organizations as Compromise Devices

According to Laurent Thévenot, organizations are “devised to generalize, both in terms of temporal and spatial validity certain forms of relations between human beings and their environment“ (Thévenot, 2001a: 407). Organizations enable coordination by creating certainty in regards to the socio-material environment, this

certainty is based on the assurance, that relations to the environment will remain stable over time. Stability is achieved by generalization, which means, that situations are handled according to general rules, if the situation at hand can be subsumed under a general rule. If, for instance, there is a general rule on how to take decisions, this rule will be applied whenever a decision has to be taken. Generalization is achieved by 'investing in forms' (Thévenot, 1984). An investment in a form is “a costly operation to establish a stable relation with a certain lifespan” (Thévenot, 1984: 9). Invested forms, like a manual on how to take decisions, sustain specific modes of coordination by qualifying persons or objects, they objectify and standardize and therefore enable coordination over time and space. Investing in forms involves more than just the usual notion of investment, as sacrificing financial liquidity, it involves sacrificing “particularization or characterizations of entities which could sustain other forms of equivalence and possible coordination” (Thévenot, 2011: 41). Examples for invested forms range from personalized equipment, like a personalized window manager for computer workers which has only limited reach, to organization-wide forms like procedures for decision making or hiring people, to public forms which have a wide spatial validity, like international time. Once investments have been made and forms have been established, coordination rests on them and it is costly to change to a different form of coordination, since for this, the underlying form-investments have to change.

With multiple orders of worth and the composite arrangement as conceptual background, it becomes possible to view organizations as social spaces in which multiple different rationalities are used for coordination. For Laurent Thévenot, organizations are “compromising devices between several modes of coordination which engage different repertoires of evaluation” (2001a: 405) because they use different form investments to connect and compromise different modes of coordination. Form-investments can take up the form of compromise arrangements, these sustain a form of coordination which is based on a compromise between different evaluation principles or orders of worth.

In summary, for Thévenot, organizations are able to deal with of two different obstacles to coordination: (1) Contingency and uncertainty, as well as (2) the presence of multiple and conflicting legitimate principles of evaluation. They can deal with these obstacles to coordination because, first, they establish certainty over time and space by the generalization of relations. Second, they establish relatively stable compromises between multiple, conflicting values by designing form investments as composite arrangements.

The Regimes of Engagement

Most English language papers that utilize the economies of worth framework solely focus on Boltanski and Thévenot's pragmatic sociology of critique as laid out in OJ. This work, however, also incorporates the work Laurent Thévenot developed after OJ, in order to deal with coordination and evaluation below the level of public justification.

The Economy of conventions differentiates between a 'horizontal' level and a 'vertical' level on which pluralism and complexity in coordination can be differentiated (Eymard-Duvernay et al. 2005). This addresses the problem of social theories that either focus on local modes of coordination – like routines or contracts -, or more public modes of coordination – like institutions or citizenship. Theories that focus either on local or public coordination, "cannot account for the movements required to shift from one to the other when a rule or law is applied with careful attention paid to the specificity of the case, when a public policy 'moves closer' to people, or when the functional object or plan is adapted for a particular use" (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005: paragraph 20). On the horizontal level of complexity in coordination, different forms of the common good, which serve as the base for generalization are distinguished. This is the level where the orders of worth are located. The 'vertical level' of coordination distinguishes between different degrees of generality that coordination is based on. The plurality on the vertical level concerns the difference between very public forms of

coordination, related to public forms of legitimation, and more local forms of coordination which rely on local ideas of legitimacy (Eymard-Duvernay et al. 2005). With the private arrangement, Boltanski and Thévenot already introduced a form of coordination that is not based on a generalizable common good in OJ. With the sociology of engagements Laurent Thévenot has developed a model that incorporates the plurality of coordination on the vertical level, it describes how agency and coordination can be supported by formats with varying degrees of generality.

Thévenot differentiates four main ways people can be engaged with their socio-material environment: The regime of public justification, in which people coordinate their actions according to a common good, the regime of planned action, in which people coordinate their actions in order to achieve a plan; the regime of engagement in familiarity, in which people protect personal and local convenience; and the regime of engaging in exploration in which excitement and novelty is pursued (2001b, 2011, 2014, 2019).[3] Social coordination in OJ is restricted to situations in which there is a need for public justification, so that critique and justification of action have to refer to some conception of a common good. In contrast, with the regime of engagements Thévenot has developed a model that incorporates different modes of agency which allow for different modes of coordination and related modes of establishing commonality. These concepts

3 Thévenot's sociology of engagements, in addition to the regimes of engagement, comprises also different ways of composing commonality and differences, the 'grammars of commonality', which refer to the regimes of familiarity, the plan and public justification (2015, 2019). The grammars are not discussed in this thesis as they have not been used. The grammars of commonality already provide typologies of communicating and differing in commonality, whereas this thesis starts from the question of how different modes of coordination influence the composition of commonality. From this perspective, the regimes are on a scale more adequate to the research interests. Furthermore, regimes and related modes of coordination do not necessarily match grammars of commonality in the context of organizations, in contrast to a political context . For instance, engaging in a plan inside an organization might be related to interests of the organization, and not the interests of individuals (see related Eranti, 2017: 297).

enable us to draw a meaningful distinction between “agency of the most personal or intimate kind and agency that is collective, public or institutional” (Thévenot, 2001b: 57).

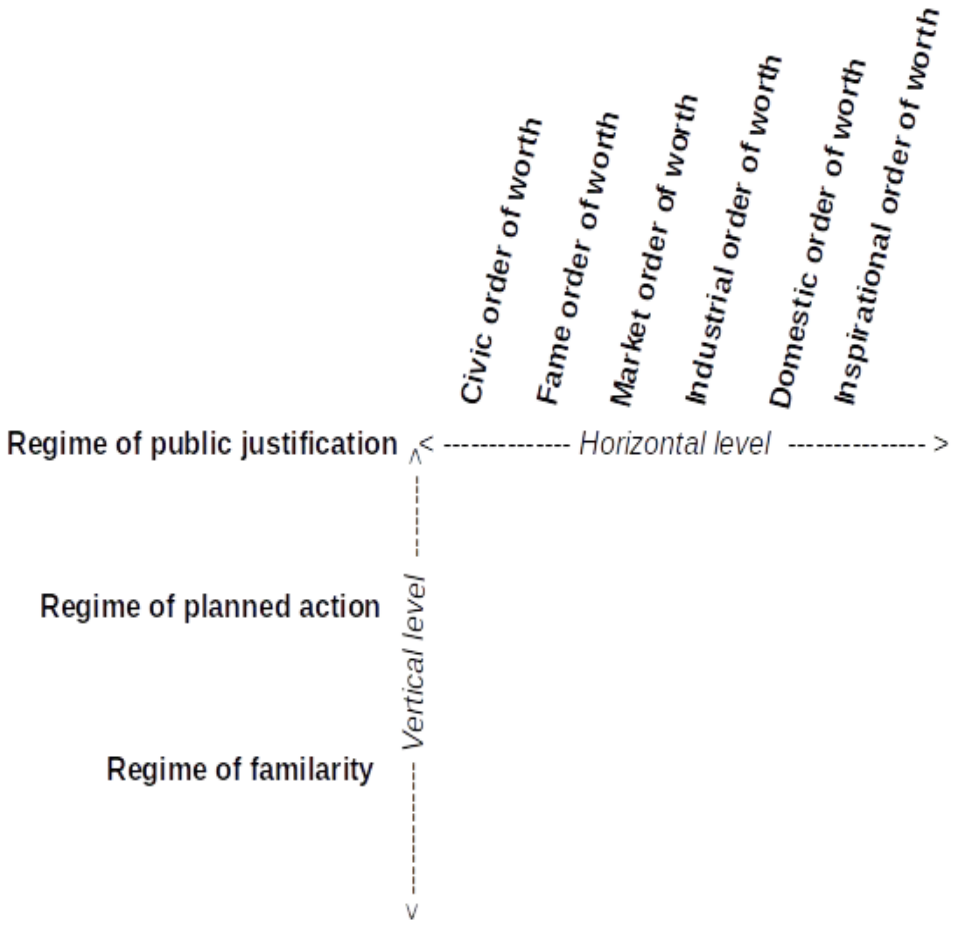

Figure 1: Horizontal and Vertical Complexity in Coordination

Regime of Engagement	Familiarity	Planned Action	Public justification
Invested power	The easiness coming from personal habituation	The autonomy of the self projected in the future	Worth qualifying the common good
Engaged good	ease	Self-projection through individual plans or projects	Participation in the common good
Engaged Reality	Personally accommodated	Functionally grasped	Qualified for the common good
Helping the other in their engagement	Taking care, demonstrating solicitude	Strengthening the will, given confidence in one's project	Preparing for the trial of public qualification

Table 1: Regimes of Engagement, adapted from Thévenot 2019

Combining the Economies of Worth Framework and the Regimes of Engagement to Analyze Collective Firms

This thesis views organizations as social spaces in which different actors with differing orientations have to coordinate their actions. To understand the continued existence of an organization, it is therefore necessary to understand how different orientations and goals are mediated and balanced. This is especially crucial to understand organizations that are not based on formal authority and control, but lateral accountability and cooperation between their members. To some extend, all collective firms have a prefigurative function for their members (Maeckelbergh, 2011), insofar as they try to create the kind of economic and social relations that they would like to see in the world. In collective firms, which strive for good working conditions and solidarity between their members, the organization is not just a means, but an end itself. An analysis of collective firms therefore has to entail a consideration of how normative values function as both resources and constraints for the organization. The economies of worth framework allows to analyze the moral complexity that organizations have to deal with and how moral

orientations are utilized and balanced in organizational structures. Collective firms in this perspective can be regarded as compromises between at least the market, the industrial, and the civic world.
However, it makes sense to assume, that the interrelation between morality and coordination in collective firms can not sufficiently be captured by the economies of worth framework. This is for two main reasons:
First, a central principle of Boltanski and Thévenot's orders of worth is that of a 'just meritocracy'. The orders of worth allow to order people and objects according to their relative contribution to a common good. Meritocracy is an idea that is in tension with the ideal of the equal worth of all members in a collective. Therefore, one can expect that in collective firms, wherever a "ranking" of members is attempted, there will be critique or resistance which is not necessarily based on a different order of worth, but on an ideal of equality. Therefore, an analysis of collective firms needs to be able to consider coordination that does not rely on the construction of equivalences and subsequent ordering.
Second, collective firms are organizations in which personal relations between members are important. An analysis of them therefore needs to include personal attachments and relations and the meanings and goods that are embedded in them.

Thévenot's regimes of engagement allow to consider coordination below the level of public justification and specifically, to understand the caring relations that an engagement in familiarity values.

Two Analytical Perspectives

In a review article on the use of the economies of worth framework in organization studies, Jagd (2011) makes a useful distinction between two perspectives on organizations that this framework allows, a synchronic and a diachronic perspective on organizations. "Studies applying the synchronic perspective focus mainly on describing co-existing orders of worth in particular organizations. Studies applying a diachronic perspective focus on analyzing 'justification work' in

organizations, studying processes of critique, justifications, testing or compromising performed by actors." (Jagd, 2011 :348).

While Jagd is focusing on studies that use the economies of worth framework, this study widens the view of coordination and justification work in organizations by including Thévenot's regimes of engagements. Jagd's distinction between synchronic and diachronic perspective is therefore modified into these two perspectives:[4]

> (1) A *justification work perspective* that tries to understand how different public goods related to orders of worth, as well as more local goods, related to the regime of planned and familiar engagement, are utilized in justification and critique and particularly, in attempts to create tests or compromises.
>
> (2) An *composite organization perspective* that tries to understand the the relationship between coordination and morality in an organization, by looking at coordinating forms which establish the co-existence or compromise between different orders of worth (on the horizontal level of complexity), as well as between different regimes of engagement (on the vertical level of complexity).

I will now shortly discuss these two perspectives and which analytical challenges and questions they entail.

Justification Work Perspective

Jagd concludes his article with the observation that, while existing research using the framework shows its usefulness in revealing different competing or conflicting rationalities in organizations, relatively few studies explicitly focus on the processes involved in justification, critique and attempts to produce compromises

4 Note that this distinction does not necessarily mean that there are no studies that combine both perspectives.

in organizations, the processes Jagd terms ‘justification work’ (2011: 355). While in 2020, there are many more studies than in 2011 that utilize the economies of worth in organization studies[5], there are still relatively few studies that analyze the unfolding of critical moments into tests in detail. This might be, because “[…] despite its apparent centrality to Boltanski and Thévenot’s (2006) original oeuvre, the notion of “test” is less fully developed by these authors and less widely adopted than the repertoire of worlds of worth.“ (Dionne et al., 2019: 21). The “less fully developed“ state of the notion of the test is one of three analytical challenges that a justification work perspective might encounter. These challenges will now be introduced shortly.

Tests, measures and instruments

In OJ, the description of tests takes up around seven pages only (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006: 133-138). These pages describe how contentions over states of worth - what Dansou and Langley (2012) call ‘test of state of worth’ - might emerge through different kinds of internal critique. Boltanski and Thévenot point out that in order to be successful, a test needs to “presuppose situations that have been purged of any ambiguities that might allow alternative worths to emerge. The situation achieves purity only if measures have been taken and arrangements set up to establish it in a common world.“ (2006: 138). Boltanski and Thévenot however do not explain in detail how people deal with the challenge of developing appropriate measures and instruments for tests. This is a topic which, as the existence of the field of valuation studies (Helgesson and Muniesa, 2013; Doganova et al., 2018) shows, is so complex and immense, it could fill at least another 389 pages book. An analysis of concrete social processes in which the evaluation of an object or a person is attempted will encounter actors dealing with problems that go beyond the question of legitimate principles of equivalence, towards question of different instantiations of orders of worth (Jaumier et al. 2017)

5 See in particular the Special Issue of Research in the Sociology of Organizations, “Justification, Evaluation and Critique in the Study of Organizations”, Cloutier et al. 2017.

and into challenges of commensuration (Espeland and Stevens, 1998) and calculation (Callon and Muniesa, 2005).

Conflict or Uncertainty

Another analytical challenge from a justification work perspective concerns the difference between uncertainty and conflict. Due to the focus on critique and justification in OJ, the critical situations that Boltanski and Thévenot describe are always the consequence of a critique. However, as we know from the EC‘s interest in uncertainty (see also Thévenot, 2002), coordination can be be endangered by cognitive as well as evaluative uncertainty, even in the absence of conflict. If actors are faced with uncertainty, either because they find themselves in unknown situations, or because situations are open to a variety of interpretations, can the process of coming to shared understandings or evaluations be analyzed with the notions of test and compromise?

Combining the economies of worth framework with the regimes of engagement

Finally, if a consideration of the horizontal level of complexity in coordination is combined with the vertical level of complexity, if the analysis considers both orders of worth and regimes of engagement, how does this change the analysis and the modeling of justification work?

Composite Organization Perspective

A composite organization perspective assumes that the co-existence of regimes of engagement, which includes the co-existence of orders of worth, both enables and constrains coordination. It is thus a perspective that extends Thévenot’s composite organization view with his regimes of engagements. To be more concrete, such a perspective makes use of concepts of the regimes, including orders of worth as well as central concepts of Boltanski and Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology of critique. The main analytical challenges of a composite organization perspective are on one hand, to recognize when different regimes of engagement are in play and on the other, to understand their use in coordination, as well as the tensions

they create. A related question is how tensions between regimes of engagement are mediated, balanced and compromised through practices and investments in forms.

Current State of Research – Literature Review

In the following, I will review academic work that is relevant for the research aims and questions of this study. For this literature review, I've conducted a systematic review of journal articles within the field of organization and management studies that use either the economies of worth or the regimes of engagement framework. Since there are not many articles in organization studies that use the regimes of engagement, I've broadened the search for literature to include all peer-reviewed journal articles that use the regimes of engagement. A detailed description of the methodology used for this literature review and a list of the reviewed articles can be found in appendix 1. The whole corpus of reviewed literature entailed 74 articles. I've read all of the articles in order to find those that are relevant either to a justification work, or a composite organization perspective. However, a result of this reading was that many of the articles use the six worlds to describe facets of their empirical cases, but are not interested in coordination, tests, compromises or coordination. Furthermore, many articles that use the notion of the compromise or test use it in a rather superficial way that does not contribute to an enhanced understanding of these concepts. In addition, there are not many papers that are interested in intraorganizational coordination. In the following I will discuss the 21 articles that provided insights that are relevant for the aims of this study.

Justification Work Perspective

Literature that is relevant for this perspective analyses either the unfolding of controversies and conflicts, or how people manage to deal with uncertainly in processes in which characteristics of people or objects have to be ranked or evaluated. The central concepts here are the different kinds of critiques, the test and the compromise. Additionally, 'regime change' (Knoll 2013), that is changing

between publicly justifiable and private forms of coming to agreements would, in principle, be a valuable component of understanding justification work. However, only one of the reviewed studies which fall under a ‘justification work perspective’ uses the regime of engagements.

Authors	Title	Year	Source title
Annisette M., Vesty G., Amslem T.	Accounting values, controversies, and compromises in tests of worth	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Bourguignon A., Chiapello E.	The role of criticism in the dynamics of performance evaluation systems	2005	Critical Perspectives on Accounting
Centemeri L.	Reframing problems of incommensurability in environmental conflicts through pragmatic sociology: From value pluralism to the plurality of modes of engagement with the environment	2015	Environmental Values
Dionne, K.-E., Mailhot, C., Langley, A.	Modeling the Evaluation Process in a Public Controversy	2019	Organization Studies
Huault, I., Rainelli-Weiss, H.	A market for weather risk? Conflicting metrics, attempts at compromise, and limits to commensuration	2011	Organization Studies
Munzer M.	Justifying the logic of regulatory post-crisis decision-making – The case of the French structural banking reform	2019	Critical Perspectives on Accounting
Patriotta G., Gond J.-P., Schultz F.	Maintaining legitimacy: Controversies, orders of worth, and public justifications	2011	Journal of Management Studies
Reinecke J.	Beyond a subjective theory of value and towards a 'fair price': An organizational perspective on Fairtrade minimum price setting	2010	Organization
Reinecke J., Van Bommel K., Spicer A.	When orders of worth clash: Negotiating legitimacy in situations of moral multiplexity	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Taupin, B.	The more things change... Institutional maintenance as justification work in the credit rating industry	2012	Management (France)
Whelan G., Gond J.-P.	Meat Your Enemy: Animal Rights,	2017	Journal of Management

	Alignment, and Radical Change		Inquiry

Table 2: Literature justification work

Controversies

In studies that analyze controversies the usage of the notion of the test varies significantly. Some papers merely use the word test in the very general sense of a situation in which people have different opinions or a stable order is endangered, thus more in the sense that Boltanski and Thévenot give to a ‘critical moment’. For instance, Patriotta et al. (2011) write that “Unsettling events like the Forsmark accident constitute legitimacy tests in the sense that they pose a challenge to the legitimacy of nuclear power as a source of energy.” (Patriotta et al., 2011: 1829). Taupin (2012) writes that “In practice, the test takes the form of a justification or a public critique.“ (Taupin, 2012: 531). Some papers are more influenced by Boltanski’s further development of the notion of the test (Boltanski, 2011). For instance, Taupin (2012) and Munzer (2019) refer to Boltanski’s distinction between ‘truth tests’ – a simple confirmation of what is there, and ‘reality tests’ – which compare what exists with what should exist. Papers that analyze controversies which include a clash between orders of worth almost exclusively describe maneuvers that are neither pure ‘tests of state of worth’ nor compromises in the exact sense that OJ gives them.

Patriotta et al. (2011) analyze a controversy which was started by a nuclear accident in a Vattenfall reactor. They trace how the enfolding controversy, which takes place in German media, is shaped by the use of different orders of worth. The paper argues that “If agents in a conflict invoke different orders of worth, however, then a ‘test of worth’ cannot be used, so that compromise may be necessary to resolve disputes.” (Patriotta et al., 2011: 1809). The paper describes different clashes between worlds that shaped the debate. Over the controversy, Vattenfall “diversified” its justification work, which was originally primarily based on the industrial world, to include arguments from other worlds. The same

diversification strategy is found in the work of pro-nuclear power stakeholders. The controversy is eventually cooled down by the creation of "a 'good enough' compromise containing elements from different orders of worth that enabled a 'buy in' from enough crucial stakeholder groups (or at least defused their active resistance)" (Patriotta et al., 2011: 1830).

Taupin (2012) analyzes the comments sent to the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for four public consultations, comparing how credit rating agencies were legitimized in these comments before and after the subprime crisis. Taupin's central finding is the 'circular figure of the compromise': There is an established view of credit rating agencies as a compromise, which allows stakeholders to use one of the arguments for the compromise, whenever critique points to another. This argumentative tactic is a kind of sophisticated 'whataboutism'. It is also an interesting explanation of the stability of compromises: Since several values are inside a compromise, if one is criticized, one of the other values can still be used to legitimize the compromise. This is in some regards the opposite of how Boltanski and Thévenot describe the mechanisms of a compromise: To them, a compromise is more fragile, because there are several values involved, which means, it is logically inconsistent. In Taupin's study, this inconsistency of the compromise it what makes its stability possible, even in a situation where it should have no legitimacy at all. What is obvious when comparing Taupin and Boltanski and Thévenot on the compromise is, however, that they are assuming very different situations: The assumption in OJ is always a situation in which there is a need for public justification. In such a situation people who can't strictly use their power, have to make their criteria for evaluation transparent, which means that they need to provide a coherent account of why something is good or bad. The situation that Taupin analyses is far from these constraints: A public consultations where comments can be sent in is a "one way" - communication, there is no possibility to react to hypocritical comments, which in turn would force people to clarify their evaluative criteria.

Munzer (2019) also analyzes justification work in the post-crisis financial sector. In order to explain why new banking regulations did not actually target structural problems, Munzer elaborates the figure of ‘symbolization’, which happens when arrangements superficially form compromises between different orders of worth, while only symbolically referencing one of these orders – the civic in her case.

Whelan and Gond’s study (2017), which analyses the public justification work of animal rights organizations, also discusses a substitute for compromises: ‘Alignment’ between worlds, which emerges when “different common worlds agree, or are ‘provoked’ (…) to agree by those with the requisite ‘competences’ (…), that a given set of empirical developments is desirable in their own, unambiguous terms“ (Whelan and Gond, 2017: 123). An example of Alignment is a movie that is both a commercial and artistic success, such a film “brings the market and inspired common worlds into alignment“ (Whelan and Gond, 2017: 123).

Reinecke et al.‘s conceptual paper (2017) discusses two substitutes for compromises, i.e. alternative forms that make the co-existence of multiple values possible and thus avoid a clash. They introduce ‘Transcendence’ in which a new moral reference point is created that “aligns two or more existing schemes under a new, higher-level point of reference“ (Reinecke et al., 2017: 54). Examples are the emergence of new worlds, like a green or projective order of worth (Thévenot et al., 2000; Boltanksi and Chiapello, 2007). The second is ‘Antagonism’, which allows to strongly side with one moral scheme, this allows to “strengthen the commitment to a common order of worth amongst a narrower audience. This may overcome conflict between different schemes of worth by putting them into contrast with a third, commonly opposed scheme of worth such as targeting a 'common enemy‘” (Reinecke et al., 2017: 55).

An exception among the papers that study controversies is Dionne et al. (2018) insofar as this is the only article in the reviewed literature that systematically

explores the notion of the test as developed in OJ. The paper studies a public controversy in Quebec that followed a governmental proposal for a major increase in higher education tuition fees. Similar to Patriotta et al. (2011), the paper analyses the media coverage of this controversy and the discourses of the major actors involved. From their analysis, they distill six types of evaluative moves that actors use in situations of controversy and how they influence a ‘test of worth’. The six evaluative moves are ‘qualifying an object’ in which an object for a test is defined through its word in one world, ‘reformulating an object’ in which other qualities of the object are pointed to re-order the evaluation in the same world, ‘requalifying an object of a test’ in which new criteria that point to evaluation in another world are pointed out, ‘materializing a new object’ which becomes the basis for a new test of worth, ‘selfcasting’ when actors discursively reorder their own worth and ‘altercasting’ when actors denote or promote other actors to re-evaluate their worth (Dionne et al., 2018: 17). All of this evaluative moves center around the object of the test. The key observation of their study is that during controversies, new test objects are created, which transforms the process of the controversy. They argue that “evaluation processes during a controversy are punctuated by a series of tests of worth built around the qualification of different objects of test (..), each of which (except the first) is materialized within the process itself as a response to an emerging configuration of qualifications and orderings generated through previous tests” (Dionne et al., 2018: 18).

Uncertainty and Commensuration

Some of the most interesting papers dealing with justification work are not interested in a controversy that is spurred by critique, but rather in processes of evaluation and commensuration. Situations that are more characterized by evaluative uncertainty than conflict. These studies seem to be ideal to further develop analytical descriptions of processes of calculation or commensuration, and the instrumentation and measurements that are needed for a test of worth.

Interestingly, all of these studies encounter compromises, or ‘test of worths in compromise’ (Anisette et al., 2017).

Bourguignon and Chiapello (2012) in their exploration of performance evaluation systems as ‘institutionalized trials’ base their notion of the test/trial explicitly on the concept that has been developed in Boltanski and Chiapello (2007). Bourguignon and Chiapello’s paper is especially interesting to this thesis, as they analyze an intra-organizational evaluation process from a perspective of organizational justice. They are interested in the (power ladden) dynamic that emerges out of reformative critique directed towards organizational evaluation processes and how the management systems over time change in response to this criticism. They develop a “trial-inspired” model of performance assessment that consists of three steps: (1) Instrumentation, which includes qualification and categorization of the performance that is to be assessed. (2) Evaluation, in which a value judgment is created. And (3) consequences, among them, the distribution of social goods. Their first step ‘instrumentation’ points to the complex and meticulous work that has to be done in order to set up a test of worth. In Bourguignon and Chiapello's case, however, instrumentation is rather unproblematic, since the performance evaluation systems they analyze are ‘institutionalized trials’ and to a large part rely on already well established criteria like operating income or sales of new goods. Bourguignon and Chiapello’s study looks at ‘internal critique’, that is critique that is aimed at a “tightening of the trial”. Therefore, the uncertainty displayed in this study is rather constrained, since it does not open up to questions of radical critique, respectively, the complexity of considering a multiplicity of conflicting higher order evaluation criteria.

Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) analyze the failed attempt of creating a market for weather derivatives in Europe. They interpret the failure to create commonly accepted calculations for derivatives as the failure to find a compromise. The compromise is framed as commensuration between different orders of worth. Their study highlights that a main obstacle to creating a compromise is a missing common interest among the involved parties: “the necessary condition for an

agreement to arise […] is the social construction of a problem whose solution could be seen as serving a common interest, despite conflicting worldviews" (Huault and Rainelli-Weiss, 2011: 1412).

Reinecke (2010) describes the determination of Fairtrade minimum prices for coffee as the establishment of a compromise between different orders of worth. In the beginning, when Fairtrade products where not marketed to a mainstream audience and significantly smaller, fair prices were established in face-to-face negotiations between producers and independent fair trading organizations, which created personal, long-term relationships based on trust and mutual recognition. This personal negotiations were later substituted with a formalized price determination based on the Cost of Sustainable Production methodology (CoSP), which calculates the cost of production. The resulting compromise for calculating minimum prices for coffee combines the CoSP methodology with democratic decision making of all stakeholders. Reinecke interprets the result as a compromise between the industrial world, in which productivity and efficiency measured by standardized criteria are valued, and the civic world, where the collective interest expressed through formal and democratic procedures is valued. In contrast to Reinecke's interpretation, the final result could be interpreted as a compromise between public goods and leaving space for the negotiation of particularities. Such a view, however, rests on ideas of morality that go beyond, respectively, below, the kind of morality that is considered in the economies of worth framework.

Annisette et al. (2017) illustrate ways in which accounting can be conceptualized within the economies of worth framework. They draw on two cases from ongoing fieldwork to illustrate this. They discuss 'accounting objects' like a triple bottom line report or a balanced scorecard as the outcomes of compromise situations in which multiple orders of worth are present. These compromise objects are developed through cycles of testing and retesting to clarify the common good, what Boltanski and Thévenot call the work of explication (2006: 283). While accounting is to them, on one hand often a tool to find and stabilize compromises, it can also be used to

secure the dominance of one single order of worth. In their second case, they describe the development of an evaluation device for large-scale capital investment projects of a water utility in Western Australia as a ‘test of worths in compromise’ that calculates the financial, social and environmental impact of a project. One of the critiques of the device targets the fact, that Aboriginal cultural and heritage issues were not included in the valuation. In response to this critique, the developers of the evaluation device argue that certain types of values “are not appropriate values to be monetized” (Annisette et al., 2017: 231).
For Anisette et al. this device is a compromise in the sense of OJ, “a single test to incorporate at once the multiple value orientations of economy, society and environment“, the critique of incommensurability does not lead to a “tightening of the test“, the involved developers “appear to have accepted the limitation of the model“ (Annisette et al., 2017: 234). While they stop here, I would argue, that it makes sense to see this instance as a compromise between what can be measured and what can’t.

Among the literature that applies the regimes of engagement, there is one article that deals with problems of commensuration. Centemeri’s article (2015) is interested in problems of incommensurability that emerge in relation to the evaluation of nature, due to the idea that the environment is a value that can not be monetized. The article thus mirrors arguments for incommensurability in Anisette et al.’s article. Centemeri applies the regimes of engagement to understand environmental valuation. She argues that “the approach of plural modes (or “regimes”) of engagement provides a sociological understanding of the unequal power of conflicting “languages of valuation”” (Centemeri, 2015: 299). In contrast to justifiable action in the regime of public justification, planned and familiar engagement are related to modes of coordination and valuation which can not be easily extended towards public justification. Tests which actors might use in these modes of engagement are less dependent on general standard assessing functions and more embedded in knowledge produced and shared through personalized practices. Centemeri distinguishes two types of incommensurability:

‘Order incommensurability’, which emerges when there are conflicting ideas on which criteria should be used for commensuration. A solution to this kind of incommensurability are the compromises Boltanski and Thévenot describe. ‘Radical incommensurability’ on the other hand, has to do with an evaluation of something, in her example the environment, as something that is part of familiar engagement. She illustrates this with the example of Native Alaskans who value the environment as a place of dwelling. This in turn makes it impossible to commensurate the value of the environment into a financial amount that could be paid as compensation for destroying the environment.

Summary Findings Justification Work

The literature review of articles that engage a justification work perspective to study the unfolding of controversies or commensuration processes provides the following four insights that are relevant for this thesis:

(1) The social context in which a controversy or commensuration is happening has to be taken into account in the analysis. For instance, Taupin and Munster both describe “false” compromises to protect the financial sector. They are “false”, in the sense that they are almost transparently not in the interest of a common good and could never hold a severe critique. But both are emerging in settings in which, even though public justification is relevant, external critique is powerless or absent. Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) analyze a context in which commensuration fails because the involved stakeholders don’t have a common interest, while both Reinecke (2010) and Annisette et al. (2017) study how different actors that share common interests create evaluative compromises.

(2) In both studies of controversies as well as evaluation processes, the main solutions for a clash between worlds are compromises, and not clarifications according to one world.

(3) Studies of controversies usually don’t seem to go into details of assessing and measuring worth, probably, because in many controversies this is not required to suspend a conflict. On the other hand, studies that deal with evaluative uncertainty and commensuration centrally focus on the possibilities of evaluating and measuring worth.
(4) In Annisette et al‘s as well as in Reinecke‘s study of commensuration processes, the evaluative tension that is surfacing is not just a problem of incommensurability due to conflicting orders of worth, but a more fundamental problem of incommensurability, where people refuse the adequacy of measurement and calculation per se. Centemeri‘s (2015) article, in which such a tensions is discussed, conceptualizes this as a tension between public and familiar engagement.

Composite Organization Perspective

Literature that is relevant for this perspective is interested in intraorganizational coordination and uses either the economies of worth framework, or the regimes of engagement, or both, to explain tensions and compromises between different modes of coordination. Although both the economies of worth framework and the regimes of engagement seem to be quite useful to study coordination inside organizations, there is only a limited number of studies that use it for this purpose.

Authors	Title	Year	Source title
Banoun A., Dufour L., Andiappan M.	Evolution of a service ecosystem: Longitudinal evidence from multiple shared services centers based on the economies of worth framework	2016	Journal of Business Research
Bérubé J., Demers C.	Creative organizations: when management fosters creative work	2019	Creative Industries Journal
Besio, C., Meyer, U.	Kompromisse in Forschungsorganisationen	2014	Organisationen und Konventionen
Bullinger B.	Family affairs: Drawing on family logic and familiar regime of engagement to contrast "close-up" views of individuals in conventionalist and institutionalist reasoning	2014	Journal of Management Inquiry
Mailhot C., Gagnon S., Langley A., Binette L.-F.	Distributing leadership across people and objects in a collaborative research project	2016	Leadership
Meilvang M.L., Carlsen H.B., Blok A.	Methods of engagement: On civic participation formats as composition devices in urban planning	2018	European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology
Meriluoto T.	Neutral experts or passionate participants? Renegotiating expertise and the right to act in Finnish participatory social policy	2018	European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology
Pernkopf-Konhäusner K.	The Competent Actor: Bridging Institutional Logics and French Pragmatist Sociology	2014	Journal of Management Inquiry
Raviola E.	Meetings between frames: Negotiating worth between journalism and management	2017	European Management Journal
Suckert, L.	Organisierter Kompromiss	2014	Organisationen und

			Konventionen

Table 2: Literature composite organization

Most studies utilizing the compromise to understand coordination inside organizations do not refer to Thévenot's (2001a) article on organizations as compromise devices, nor his article on form investments (1984). This might be, because these articles have been published in journals outside of organization studies, in the *European Journal of Social Theory*, respectively *Social Science Information*. There are two exceptions, both from the German edited volume on "Organisationen und Konventionen" (Knoll, 2014): Suckert (2014) discusses how 'ecopreneur-firms', firms that try to integrate economic and ecological goals, use discursive compromises such as 'market success because of environment protections', as well as form-investments-as-compromise-forms such as CO2 offsetting for flights. Besio and Meyer (2014) describe how research organization use compromise forms to mediate between different rationalities, for instance research projects are compatible with a scientific rationality, but they also allow rationalities which are external to the scientific community, particularly the interests of funding bodies.

Mailhot et al. (2016) studies the Remote Networked Schools Initiative in Quebec, which was started to connect pupils located in rural areas with other schools through optical fiber networks and subsequently, to study educational experiments based on remote collaboration. The article is interested in how leadership in this collaborative research project, in which several logics co-exist, is possible. They describe how leadership is distributed across people and objects in 'actor-object couplings', which in turn facilitates the coordination of action across different orders of worth. An example for a leader-object coupling is that of the project leader Renée and the steering committee. The steering committee is on one hand a space for democratic deliberation, and at the same time transmits demands to researchers and to the field. Renée became a spokesperson of this committee and sometimes used this in settings, in which her own authority was insufficient to spur

action. While the steering committee is described as a mediating object between the civic and the industrial worth, the coupling with Renée establishes distributed leadership.

The main coordinative tension that Bérubé and Demers (2019) describe is between “creativity and business“. They study how managers of small advertising agencies establish compromises between these two orientations. They suggest four creative management work profiles which describe how creative work is divided and coordinated in advertising agencies. For instance in the “Versatile“ profile, all creative workers manage their own projects, they are not only in charge of the conceptual work, but also are in frequent touch with customers. In this profile, in the beginning of a project all creative workers in the agency are involved in the conception. Which Bérubé and Demers interpret as relieving the tension between inspired and market world by including the civic world. “For example, if a creative worker was to neglect the inspired world in favor of the market world – to meet the demands of a customer for example – the other creative workers, who are responsible of judging the creative aspect, would intervene so that the final product creates a balance among the market world and the inspired world.“ (Bérubé and Demers, 2019: 331)

Banoun et al. (2016) analyze the tensions that follow the attempts to introduce new processes of standardization through the introduction of shared service centers (SSC) in five different large organizations. An SSC is business unit that mutualizes several support functions and operates as internal suppliers of support services. The article develops a process model which explains the conflicting, but eventual successful inclusion of the SSCs in their client organizations. The phases go from a tensions between industrial and domestic worth, clarification in the industrial worth, a local arrangement and eventually a compromise which included the civic worth: “The SSCs, with a civic perspective, tried to take into account the expertise of each internal client so that each contributed to improving the SSC. [...] SSCs that had previously focused on standardizing processes became innovative

service providers. The distinction between client and supplier became more and more irrelevant, as the internal clients co-created the offers and contributed to developing the SSCs' strategy (adapted co-creation value)" (Banoun et al., 2016: 2996).

The article describes the initial tension that arise between the SSCs and their internal clients as one between the industrial world (the SSC) and the domestic world (internal clients). According to Banoun et al. the internal clients protect the domestic world because the introduction of the SSC "caused substantial changes in the work habits of the internal clients and destroyed their previous relationships with their local support function that had been based on personal relations and trust, the SSCs tended to impose upon their internal clients an industrial approach by standardizing services and new processes" (Banoun et al., 2016: 2994).

Reading this study, it seems to be an ideal-type example of what can go wrong if scholars approach empirical reality with the purely deductive strategy of looking for conflicts between orders of worth. They look for conflicts between orders of worth, and this is indeed what they subsequently find. However, according to the description of the initial conflict, the conflicting ideas of which is "good" at stake here, could also be understood as a tension between the regime of planned and familiar engagement. When people in an organization criticize that outsiders impose new work patterns on them that destroy their relationships and familiar working habits, they are not necessarily criticizing a version of a just social order from the perspective of another social order, they might actually criticize the endangerment of familiarity for the sake of standardization.

The main coordinative tension that Raviola (2017) is interested in is between journalistic and management frames inside an organization that operates an online journalism platform. Raviola describes the tension between journalism and management, as a tension between the equivalence principles of "truth and novelty" and "efficiency and control". Using ideas from both Callon (1998) and OJ, Raviola describes how in contrast to formal meetings in which heated discussions take place, in everyday practice "small tests" help to "cool down" situations: "In

everyday work, for instance, the tension between journalism and management seems not to be openly conflictual and is resolved by everyday mundane “small tests”(…) These are almost invisible and come to become a “natural” part of everyday work and routines. Controversies on worth of actions, decisions, and tools in everyday work, thus, seem to be constantly cooled down, as news needs to be produced constantly and discussions on overflows cannot paralyze the ongoing work.“ (Raviola, 2017: 7). While Raviola does not use the regimes of engagement in her theoretical framework, what she aptly describes here is a change from the regime of public justification to planned engagement, where people evaluate the situation at hand according to shared plans that have to go on, instead of considerations of higher goods.

Two conceptual papers discuss the implication of different regimes of engagement for coordination in organizations: Bullinger (2014) in a paper that discusses how convention theory can contribute to research on institutional logics (IL), contrasting institutional logic’s ‘family logic’ with Thévenot’s familiar engagement when dealing with the work of HR managers. She argues, that “in private situations, long-standing relationships and so on, coordination does not depend on referring to higher order principles” (Bullinger, 2014: 330). Therefore an IL perspective would benefit from incorporating the regimes of engagement approach, to understand situations in which HR managers engage with close colleagues in everyday coordination. Pernkopf-Kornhäuser (2014) in a similar vein, discusses how the notion of the actor can be made more ‘competent’ by stressing people’s reflexivity in dealing with multiple logics in their practices.

In an empirical study of initiatives in the sector of Finnish participatory social policy, Meriluoto (2018) analyses how different definitions of expertise render different modes of participation more preferable or justifiable. For instance, if in an initiative participation is legitimate due to it allowing the rehabilitation of citizens, participation is quite limited, since expertise is primarily seen as a therapeutic tool that helps to make people feel more confident in themselves and their capabilities.

In this initiatives the preferred mode of engagement is a composition of “familiar in a plan”. In contrast, initiatives that value participation because it contributes to co-creation through different kinds of expertise, the preferred mode of engagement is planned engagement.

While not strictly a paper on the coordination of practices inside an organization, Meilvang et al.‘s paper (2018) on civic participation formats as composition devices in urban planning is the only research paper I could find that uses Thévenot‘s sociology of engagements and the orders of worth framework simultaneously to explain coordination. The paper analyses civic participation formats in urban planning in Denmark, where the traditional participation format, the municipal hearing process is highly formalized and legally mandatory. The paper describes the hearing process as a compromise between the civic and the industrial order of worth. This compromise, however is criticized as being too bureaucratic, abstract and expert-driven. They argue that “participation has shifted from a main concern with involving citizens in discussing the justification of planning, to a situation in which involving citizens co-exists with quite different attempts to involve users and stakeholders into negotiations over urban interests and opinions.“ (Meilvang et al., 2018: 20) Newly emerging participatory formats – the dialogue meeting and the workshop - are institutionalized responses to this critiques which construct compromises between civic and market work (hearing dialogue), as well as between civic and project worth (workshop). But at the same time, these formats are composition devices for urban planning, configured so as to transform familiar engagements into an engagement with a plan.

Summary Findings Composite Organizations

There are three findings from the literature review on composite organizations that are important for this study.

(1) First, considering the high number of articles in the field of organization and management studies that employ the economies of worth framework, only a relatively small amount – which has been discussed here – analyses intraorganizational coordination. This might be, because such an analysis necessitates the observation of organizational practices.

(2) The analysis of intraorganizational coordination and related tensions has to be aware of the fact, that not all controversies develop in a setting in which public justification is important. Since firms have to do things and follow plans, often a controversy will be ‘relativized’ by changing from an engagement in public justification towards planned engagement (Raviola, 2017). Furthermore, firms are social spaces in which familiar engagements develop which might come into tension with planned engagement or engagement in public justification (Banoun et al., 2017). Scholars who use the economies of worth framework, without considering the nature of the situations they analyze, risk to misinterpret their empirical findings.

(3) There are already studies that demonstrate that regimes of engagement can be compromised (Meriluoto, 2018) as well as composed (Meilvang et al., 2018)

Research Aims and Research Questions

From a theoretical perspective, the problem of coordination in the presence of multiple, at times conflicting rationalities is not limited to collective firms, as all organizations have to mediate between “several modes of coordination which engage different repertoires of evaluation” (Thévenot, 2001a: 405). While all organizations from this perspective are compromises, it seems obvious that there is something specific, and specifically interesting, about the compromises that collective firms, in the absence of formal hierarchies, have to create in order to deal with complexity in coordination.

Furthermore, from a perspective that is interested in the concrete processes of ‘justification work’, collective firms are especially interesting, since their democratic governance structures create a setting in which there is ample opportunity for competing moral considerations and values to emerge. Negotiation processes in this context are ‘hot situations’ in which everything can become controversial (Callon, 1998).

This thesis has two research aims which have been developed as a consequence of the analytical challenges related to the justification work and the composite organization perspective, as well as the empirical interest in collective firms.

The first aim of the study is to combine the frameworks of the economies of worth and the regimes of engagement to explain the relationship between coordination and evaluation in organizations.
To address this aim, the study poses the following research questions:

> (1) How can the pragmatic processes which aim at the resolution of evaluative uncertainty or conflict be analyzed using the notions of test, compromise and regimes of engagement?

(2) How do organizations deal with the co-existence of not only different orders of worth, but different regimes of engagements in intraorganizational coordination?

The second aim of this study is to use the combination of these frameworks to understand how collective firms achieve a balance between being a company and a collective.

To address these aims, the study poses the following research questions:

(1) What are the main normative and coordinative tensions in collective firms and how are they related to different regimes of engagement?

(2) What are the practices and compromises collective firms employ to balance these tensions?

Research Design

The study analyzes three different collective firms. All of these three are similar in the sense that they strive for working conditions that promote solidarity between colleagues, they collectively govern their organization and use collective consent-finding for decision-making. While they have similar aspirations and governance structures, these collective firms differ in the kind of work they are doing. Democratic, collective governance is only one source of coordinative and evaluative tensions inside a collective firm, another factor possibly contributing to tensions are the goods or services produced, which are related to different possibilities and constraints in regards to structuring the process and the division of labour inside a firm. Therefore, the study included the case of a firm that sells goods (*radical cola collective*), a firm that sells services (*call a bike*) and a firm that works project-based (*good tech collective*). This sampling strategy has been chosen to explore the interrelationship between justification work and the kind of structuring that particular logics of work processes prescribe.

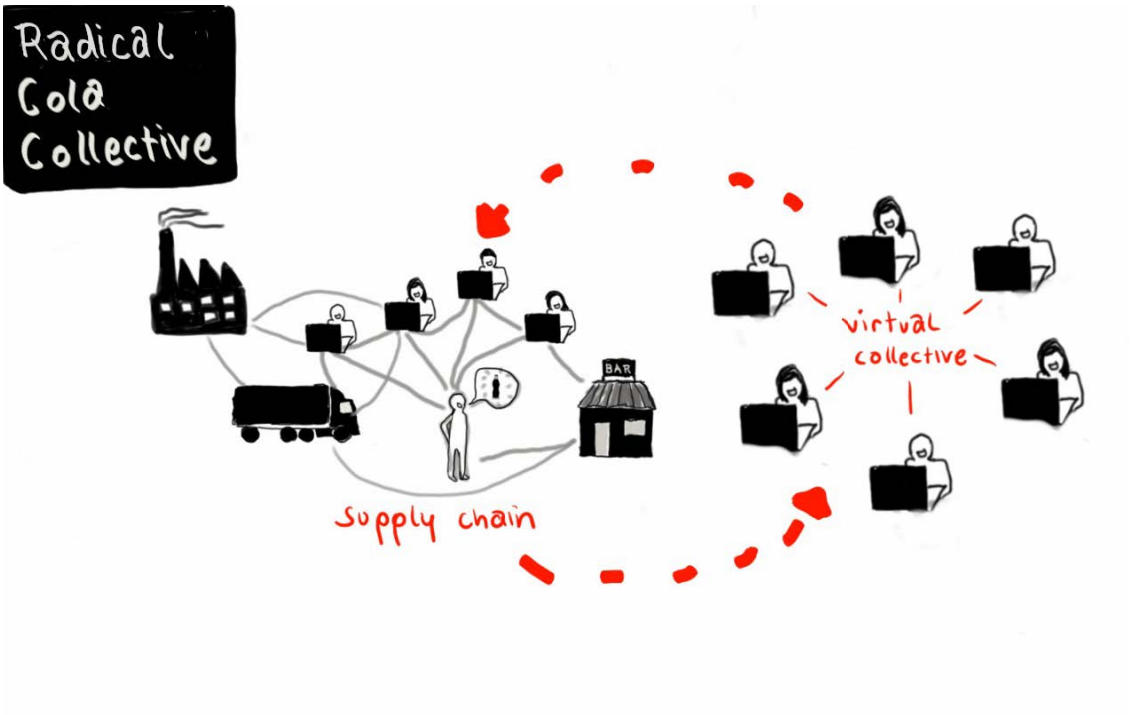

Figure 2: The Radical Cola Collective

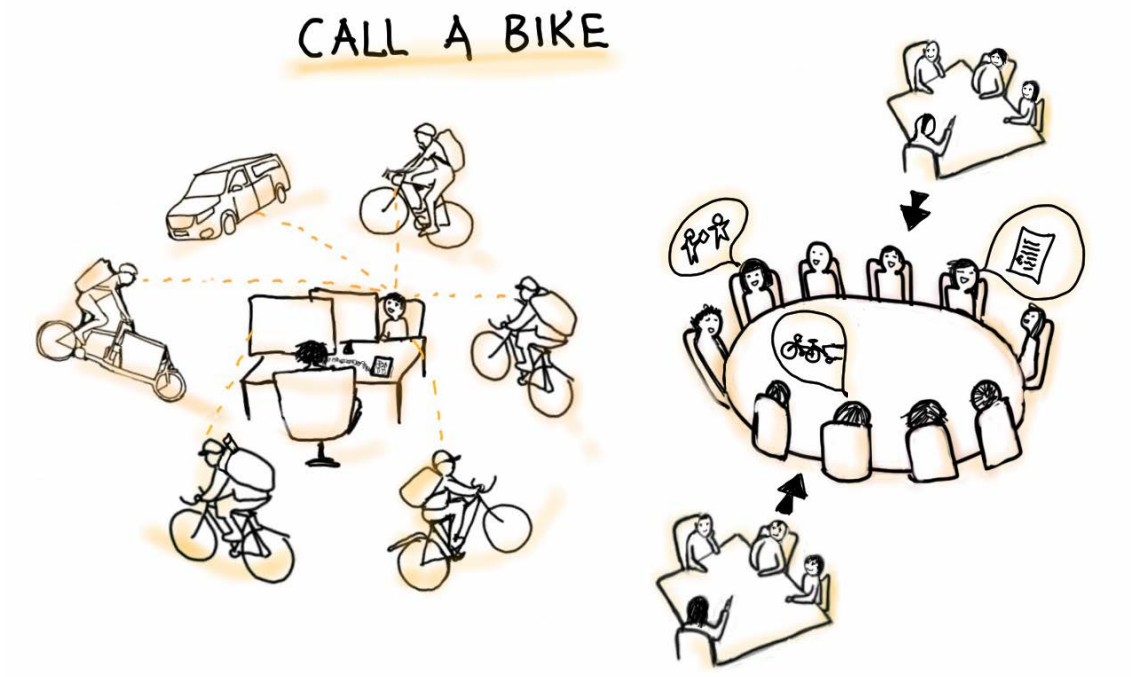

Figure 3: Call a Bike

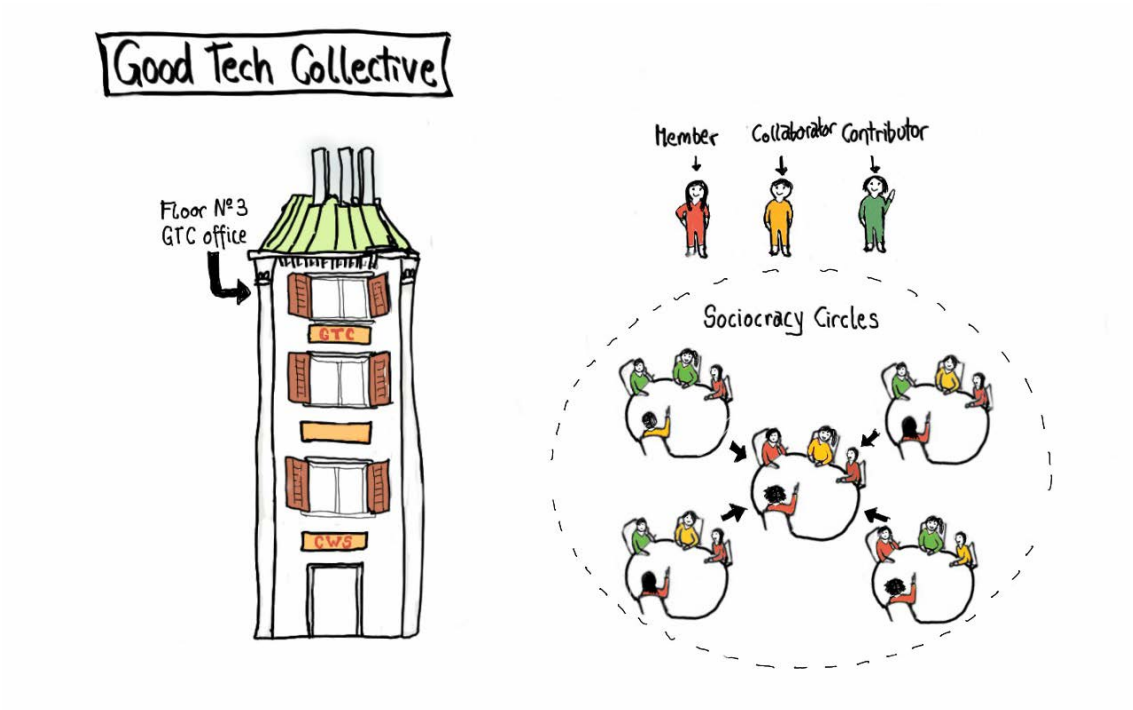

Figure 4: The Good Tech Collective

To be able to understand the interrelationship between modes of coordination, relational practices and normative ideas, as well as how uncertainty and conflict are dealt with in critical moments, this study used a multiple-case study approach. A case study approach allows to use multiple sources of evidence and benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2002: 14).

Data were gathered in three main ways: Semi-structured interviews were conducted in all of the collective firms, as well as observation of their meetings and daily work practices. In addition the study draws on the analysis of internal documents that were available online. While the *radical cola collective* (RCC) conducts all of their collective communication online, both *call a bike* (CAB) and the *good tech collective* (GTC) have extensive internal wikis, which include, among others, the minutes of meetings.

The main methodological strategy for the analysis of all three cases was threefold:

(1) To look for critical moments, that is moments of uncertainty, as well as to look for tests, that is moments of evaluation. Subsequently, to try to understand how people use justification work to come to shared understandings of a situation or an evaluation.

(2) To look for central form investments that stabilize relations and create order(ing).

(3) To look for central compromises between different values and hmodes of coordination.

The firms themselves, as well as methods for data collection and analysis are described in detail in the articles of this thesis.

	Observation	**Interviews**	**Documents**
Radical Cola Collective	2 annual “offline meetings” - which included presentations and discussions of research in progress. Both over a weekend, with shared accommodation and collective cooking. 2 workshops on democratic organizing held by a member of the RCC in a public setting.	3	More than 300 e-Mails out of all e-Mails on the mailinglist between 2003 and 2014. More than 200 posts on the online board out of all posts between 2014 and 2016.
Call a Bike	6 working days in the office. 4 general assemblies. 1 annual one-day-long plenary. All over the duration of 20 months.	7	46 - minutes of meetings and entries in the internal wiki.
Good Tech Collective	Flexible ethnography over 3 months, including social activities, as well as a two-day networking meeting with other tech-cooperatives on the countryside	13	42 - minutes of meetings and entries in the internal wiki.

Table 3: Data sources of the case studies.

Findings

This chapter provides an overview of the articles that are part of this thesis, as well as their main findings.

ID	Author(s)	Title	Year	Source title
Pohler 2019	Pohler, N.	Commensuration, compromises and critical capacities: Wage determination in collective firms	2019	*Social Science Information 58(2): 261-281*
Pohler 2020a	Pohler, N.	Evaluation and the tension between generalization and particularity: The negotiation of supplementary child allowance in a collective firm	2020	*ephemera. Theory & politics in organization. forthcoming*
Pohler 2020b	Pohler, N.	Composite Relations: Organizations between collective and company	2020	
Pohler and van Elk 2020	Pohler, N. and van Elk, S.	Duality, uncertainty and management consultancy as practice: navigating conflicting regimes of engagement	2020	

Table 4: Articles of this thesis.

Pohler, Nina. "Commensuration, compromises and critical capacities: Wage determination in collective firms." *Social Science Information* 58.2 (2019): 261-281.

This article analyses pay determination in two collective firms, the *radical cola collective* (RCC) and the *good tech collective* (GTC). Pay determination is conceptualized as a process of commensuration in which a compromise between different principles of equivalence has to be created. The article highlights the multidimensionality of wage determination and the challenge of commensurability between these dimensions. The article develops a process-oriented approach to understand commensuration which is based on Callon and Muniesa‘s (2005) understanding of calculation. To introduce the question of legitimacy in the evaluation process, this approach is supplemented with concepts from Botlanski and Thévenot‘s work on critical capacities. The article argues that understanding commensuration has to entail an analysis of the situated justification work that produces commensurable and incommensurable entities. Based on Boltanski and Thévenot‘s work the article develops a framework that can explain which kinds of critiques can hinder commensuration on the three stages of calculation of Callon and Muniesa‘s model. The analysis identifies four factors that make the achievement of a stable compromise for pay determination unlikely: First, incommensurability can be the result of a radical refusal of setting up differences or equivalencies. Second, it can be the result of a disagreement over possible legitimate principles of equivalence, or their relative worth. Third, a disagreement over the limits of meritocracy, i.e. relative importance of merit-based measures vis-a-vis needs-based measures further complicates commensuration. Fourth, certain characteristics are by nature hard to measure, or need an established infrastructure to be measured. By using Callon and Muniesa‘s model to determine the stages that are necessary to evaluate a person or an object, this article shows how Boltanski and Thévenot’s concepts of critique and test can be complemented with a framework that considers the stages of separation, association, manipulation and transformation that are involved in evaluation. In particular, the article shows the importance of legitimate principles of difference and equivalence

for processes that can lead to evaluation. In this regard, it explores the specific problem that the formal equality of members poses to the question of evaluating differences. The paper furthermore extends extant literature on commensuration and compromises by taking into account obstacles to compromise that go beyond the need for a common interest (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011).

Pohler, Nina. "Evaluation and the tension between generalization and particularity: The negotiation of supplementary child allowance in a collective firm" *ephemera. Theory & politics in organization.* Forthcoming (2020).

This article follows the justification work during a process of commensuration, the negotiations for a model to calculate supplementary child allowance in the *radical cola collective* (RCC). The model that the RCC is looking for is conceptualized as an evaluation device: A device that standardizes how people and things are evaluated. Boltanski and Thévenot‘s test is used as a heuristic framework to follow the justification work of the involved actors. The evaluation process in case, however, is more a discovery process than a conflict between established ideas or values; it is more exploration than exploitation. The paper illustrates that in order to mobilize the test for empirical studies and to make use of the potential of the conceptual apparatus of Boltanski and Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology of critique, tests should not be seen as linear endpoints, but rather as ‘temporary truces’ with varying degrees of stability (Reinecke et al., 2017). While, in a first phase, the RCC agrees on an evaluation device for calculating supplementary child allowance, this is criticized and subsequently replaced in the second phase. During the discussion, the objects of the test are not always clear, and indeed, at several points the relevant beings of the test have to be re-defined. Supplementary child allowance can be seen as a test for a good, social employer, therefore, considerations oscillate between considerations of what the responsibilities of a just employer are, and considerations about how to calculate the costs of raising children in a standardized form. In addition, supplementary child allowance is

something that is paid to parents, and throughout the discussion, it needs to be clarified, that this involves people who live with their partner‘s children as well. This case shows that successful evaluation is related to established and available measures. It also shows, that there can be different interpretations of the same common good, which can lead to different, conflicting test arrangements. In the end the collective fails to develop an evaluation device that would allow to standardize the evaluation of the amount of costs of raising children that a “good” employer has to pay. The collective settles on a device that signifies worth but refrains from evaluation. One of the main findings of this article is, that the main obstacle in this process is a tension between general and particular, or what can be legitimately commensurated and what not. The solution the collective eventually settles on is a compromise between the need for a general solution and the hesitation to use a standardized format to evaluate the financial needs of different parents and their children. The analysis furthermore shows, that even in a situation that is characterized by an imperative to justification, people might settle for solutions that are good enough, or ‘satisficing’.

Pohler, Nina. “Composite Relations: Organizations between collective and company”.

Based on findings from *call a bike* (CAB) and the *good tech collective* (GTC), this paper shows how their relationships are configured in such a way that they allow to balance and mediate different modes of coordination. The paper distinguishes two different kinds of logics that firms use to coordinate work: First, coordination based on generalization, that is, the use of standards, roles and rules. Second, coordination based on familiarity, which rests on intimacy and detailed, often tacit knowledge and understanding. Both coordination logics have a moral dimension: Generalization is justified by, and justifies common goods, while coordination based on familiarity protects particular goods and needs. Based on Zelizer’s work on differentiated ties (2005) and Thévenot’s composite organizations as compromising devices (2011a), as well as his regimes of engagements (2001b,

2011b), this paper develops the heuristic concept of the composite relation. The composite relation is a conceptual tool that helps to uncover how organizations mediate between coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity. The composite relation thus contributes to literature on coordination in organizations and particularly extends Thévenot's work on organizations as compromise devices, by adding the consideration of coordination based on familiarity. The case studies in this paper illustrate that small organizations with democratic governance develop composite relations that are more open to the particular, since they rely on coordination based on engagement in familiarity, which fosters shared understandings and trust. For both CAB and GTC coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity are equally important. By creating composite relations these collective firms are able to reconcile and balance different coordination logics as well as related moral considerations. Through this composition they achieve to be neither 'just' a collective, nor 'just' a company.

Pohler, Nina and van Elk, Sam. "Duality, uncertainty and management consultancy as practice: navigating conflicting regimes of engagement".

This article analyses the practices of consultants in two very different organizations, the *good tech collective* (GTC) and a large hospital in the UK. The article describes a comparative case study of consultants' practices in both sites. The study is based on observational, interview and documentary data from both sites. The material for the study was coded by both authors separately for their cases. After an initial state of coding, the authors compared their codes and subsequently developed a common code scheme to capture consultant's practices in their respective sites. The article is motivated by an attempt to explain a duality in consultant's practices which is often noted in the literature on management consultants. Consultants' practices are theorized using Thévenot's regimes of engagement, in particular the tension between coordination based on familiar engagement and coordination based on planned engagement. This tension is

linked to a historical change in ideas of good governance, rationality and efficiency. Within new management, a Fordist-Taylorist ideal had been replaced by a new ideal of flexible and lean organizations. The rise of flexibility and personal, subjective factors in management and organizational governance now coexists with attempts to standardize and control even creative and knowledge-based work. The article relates the contrast between traditional bureaucratic norms of order and new ideals of innovative organizations, between standards-based and "flexible" coordination, to tensions between coordination based on familiar engagement and coordination based on planned engagement. Through Thévenot's framework, the article is able to relate consultants' qualities to the organizations' uncertainties between planning and familiarity. The article models the practices that consultants use to balance and mediate tensions between these two modes of coordination, as well as the resistance these practices face. While consultants were hired to deal with an uncertainty between familiarity and planning, this uncertainty was articulated differently in both organizations. The GTC wanted to increase the role of planning to protect its familiar core and faced uncertainty over how to do so. The Hospital's uncertainty sprang instead from the tension between central plans and divisional particularity. These differing uncertainties implied different orientations between planning and familiarity: at the GTC, coordination based on planned engagement aimed to protect, while at the hospital it aimed to contain, familiar coordination.

Discussion and Conclusion

Economies of Worth and the Regimes of Engagement Combined

The first aim of this study is *to combine the frameworks of the economies of worth and the regimes of engagement to explain the relationship between coordination and evaluation in organizations.* The thesis demonstrates, that such an analysis is not only possible, but also yields important insights on intraorganizational

coordination. This is shown through the analysis of two different kinds of ‘critical moments’ in which tensions between different goods surface, on one hand, evaluation processes (Pohler, 2019, 2020a), on the other, tensions resulting from the co-existence of different modes of coordination, based on different regimes of engagement (Pohler, 2020b; Pohler and van Elk, 2020).

Evaluation Processes

Pohler 2019 and Pohler 2020a analyze processes in which collective firms try to develop evaluation devices. These two articles therefore address the research question “*How can the pragmatic processes which aim at the resolution of evaluative uncertainty or conflict be analyzed using the notions of test, compromise and regimes of engagement?*”.
To understand the unfolding of evaluation processes, it is necessary to not only understand the dynamics of critique and justification, but also the pragmatic steps that lead from the attribution of worth to the calculation and measurement of worth. In this regard, Bourguignon and Chiapello (2012) in their study of performance evaluation systems developed a three step model that leads from instrumentation, to evaluation, and finally, consequences. Pohler 2019 aims to clarify the steps in evaluation processes as well, but in contrast to Bourguignon and Chiapello’s case, in my cases, the question of instrumentation is radically uncertain and contested. Consequently, the article develops a framework to understand how instruments, respectively, evaluation devices are developed from the start. To do this, the articles utilizes Callon and Muniesa‘s calculation framework (2005), which has three stages as well, but starts with a more fundamental operation, the sorting out of relevant entities for calculation. With ‘sorting out of relevant entities’, ‘creation of relations between entities’ and ‘extraction of calculation’, Callon and Muniesa’s model provides a useful description of the stages that are necessary to establish a test arrangement. These stages are not theorized in Boltanski and Thévenot’s model of the test. The article thus provides a theoretical extension of the notion of the test in OJ. While Callon and Muniesa’s framework is used to refine an analysis

that follows Boltanski and Thévenot's ideas of evaluation, this article also offers a refinement of the calculation model. This in turn allows to understand how different critiques on the three different stages of calculation can endanger commensuration. The systematic approach that is thus developed highlights the importance of legitimate principles of difference and equivalence. Boltanski and Thévenot discuss the importance of a principle of difference for their polity model in OJ (2006: 74ff), but it does not play a role in their elaboration of critical capacities. Considering the need for legitimate principles of difference provides an enhanced understanding of incommensuration, which complements existing understandings of the relationship between incommensuration and engagement in familiarity. Centemeri (2015) in her discussion of environmental evaluation shows that the regime of public justification does not exhaust the possible moral orientations of people and relates 'radical incommensurability' to an engagement in familiarity. She explains radical incommensurability as the consequence of human-environment relations that can be termed as 'dwelling'. "When dwelling, the human-environment relation is both that of a biological space to which human vital functions are connected and that of a 'milieu' – a material and social place of proximity – in which the person and some of her capacities are 'distributed'" (Centemeri, 2015: 4). A consideration of legitimate principles of difference can contribute to this analysis: If people consider their relationship to their environment as "dwelling" rooted in familiarity, there is no legitimate principle of difference that would allow to separate people from their environment, a separation that is necessary for the kind of instrumental relationship that allows to calculate the worth of the environment.

Pohler 2020a also contributes to studies utilizing the notion of the test. The critical moment that is studied in this paper is characterized by profound uncertainty, which can not be solved by selecting an order of worth and putting it to a test. Instead, a collective discovery process ensues. What is at stake in this process is not only who should be evaluated and how, but also it if it is possible to develop a fair model for all situations in the first place. The analysis shows, that successful evaluation is related to established and available measures. It also shows, that

there can be different interpretations of the same common good, which can lead to different, conflicting test arrangements. The analysis of the negotiations surrounding supplementary child allowance furthermore highlights the tension between general and particular in evaluation processes. Particularity in some sense includes familiarity, but it is broader, since in the discussion of supplementary child allowance particularity includes the planned engagement of particular parents and their children. Pohler 2020a furthermore extends Dionne et al.'s (2018) observation, that "valuation processes during a controversy are punctuated by a series of tests of worth built around the qualification of different objects of test " (Dionne et al., 2018: 18), since in the RCC case, the relevant beings that should be tested change, as well as their definitions.

Both Pohler 2019 and Pohler 2020a describe evaluation processes which entail meanings and moral orientations that can not be captured if the idea of morality is restricted to the level of public justification. The analysis of evaluation processes in this thesis therefore demonstrates the analytical advantage of using a framework that is able to acknowledge and describe the valuation of particular goods.

Co-Existence of Different Modes of Coordination in Organizations

Pohler 2020b and Pohler and van Elk 2020 address the research question *"How do organizations deal with the co-existence of not only different orders of worth, but different regimes of engagements in intraorganizational coordination?".* Though Raviola (2017) does not use the distinction between different modes of coordination, her study she shows, that the regime of planned engagement is so important in organizations, that in daily-practice controversies are regularly cooled down or set aside. This allows that the work that is necessary for the continued existence of a firm, for their "projection into the future" (Thévenot, 2011), can continue. The analysis of the negotiations of fair payment (Pohler, 2019), as well as the 'satisficing' solution for supplementary child allowance (Pohler, 2020a) point to this conclusion as well: An analysis of the relationship between coordination and evaluation in organizations has to consider the regime of planned engagement, in

which evaluation is based on the good of the achievement of a plan. Existing studies that utilize the regimes of engagement to explain coordination show that, while familiar engagement can lead to tensions with other regimes, these tensions can be resolved through compromises (Merilutoto, 2018) and compositions (Meilvang et al., 2018). Pohler and van Elk (2020) and Pohler (2020b) further contribute to this. These articles discuss the tension that results from the co-existence of coordination based on different regimes, and demonstrate how different practices (Pohler and van Elk, 2020) and composite relations (Pohler, 2020b) can balance and mediate between them. While this thesis focuses on collective firms, Pohler and van Elk uses a comparative case study design that includes a hospital and a collective firm, thus showing that both the tension between regimes, as well as practices to reduce this tension are phenomena that are relevant for organizations in general.

Both Pohler 2020b and Pohler and van Elk 2020 demonstrate, that a perspective that does not limit the analysis of intraorganizational coordination to the question of different orders of worth, yields important insights on the role coordination at different levels of generalization, as well as related tensions and compromises.

Collective Firms and the Balance between Company and Collective

The second aim of this study is *to use the combination of the economies of worth framework and the regimes of engagement to understand how collective firms achieve a balance between being a company and a collective*.
The thesis demonstrates, that this combination can clarify specific characteristics of collective firms which become apparent in the way evaluation processes unfold (Pohler, 2019, 2020a), as well as in their coordinative tensions and related compromises (Pohler, 2020b; Pohler and van Elk, 2020).
All of the articles of this thesis address the research questions "*What are the main normative and coordinative tensions in collective firms and how are they related to different regimes of engagement?"* and "*What are the practices and compromises collective firms employ to balance these tensions?".*

Evaluation Processes in Collective Firms

Pohler 2019 and 2020a analyze evaluation processes in collective firms. Pohler 2019 describes how fair payment is negotiated at the RCC and the GTC. Both collective firms acknowledge differences in needs, as well as “competence” between members. But whereas the GTC has a differentiated pay system, as well as a formula that can be used to calculate differentiated pay, members do not regard their solution as fair. At the RCC, there is an equal pay system which is seen as problematic and consequently, there is a failed attempt to shift towards a “fair pay formula”. Both firms are not entirely content with their respective solutions, but fail to develop a satisfying one. The analysis shows, that the incommensurability of members, their needs and their worth is strongly related to their ideas of what it means to be a collective, which implies acknowledging that members are both different and equal. For instance, one RCC members argues that a collective has to value all its members equally, and therefore there should be equal pay for everyone. For another member, valuing members means acknowledging their differences, and therefore, pay should be differentiated. At the GTC, the tension between difference and equality has a different starting point, as there is differentiated pay already. Two of the members think they would deserve more pay in principle, but hesitate to ask for a raise. One of the reasons for this is that they would prefer to implement a general solution for everyone, as they don’t feel certain that they are the only (special, different) ones who should be singled out for re-evaluation. The tension between difference and equality here can be seen as one between particularity – do I deserve my own, particular solution? – and generalization – should we not have a general solution?.

The formal equality of members thus influences the perception of legitimate differences and, in consequence, the normative framing of pay. In addition, the formal equality of members creates situations in which it is very likely that a critical moment emerges. It is thus a context that is more open for radical critique and the potential presence of multiple principles of equivalence. This in turn means, that incommensurability is more likely to emerge in collective firms than in conventional ones.

Pohler 2020a discusses the negotiation of supplementary child allowance at the RCC. In this process, there is a new variation of the dynamic between difference and equality. The question of equal pay is re-visited not due to the acknowledgment of differences in worth, but between needs in members. But while members try to develop a common understanding of how supplementary child allowance should be calculated, the eventually unmet challenge they face is to find a general solution for different parents and their children. This again points to the tension between particularity and generalization. Pohler 2020a also demonstrates the relationship between the unfolding of an evaluation process and the specific “value-measure-environment” (Brighenti, 2018) in which it takes place. The complexity of the task of developing an evaluation device for supplementary child allowance, in combination with the radical openness of the situation, leads to a process in which values and their appropriate translation into measures are simultaneously discovered and created. During this, together with the prevalent ideas of justice, the aims, subjects and objects of the test change.

Pohler 2019 and Pohler 2020a demonstrate the specificity of collective firms as context for evaluation processes. On one hand, they are a context in which more voices have an equal right to be heard, which means that radical critique is more likely to be voiced than in conventional firms. On the other hand, the formal equality of all members in combination with the importance of familiar engagement provides a context in which tensions between particular and general goods arise.

Co-Existence of Different Modes of Coordination in Collective Firms

Pohler and van Elk 2020 argues that the central goal of a collective firm, the GTC, is to protect its familiar coordination, while also allowing for the kind of certainty in planning that planned coordination and standardization allow. Balancing these two modes of coordination is such a big challenge, that a consultant is engaged to facilitate this. The paper shows how the consultant addresses this tension by

implementing practices that balance regimes or narrow their distances, supported by mediating objects. The paper also shows that mediating forms could become the focus of resistance to these practices, when members of the GTC felt that the standardizing efforts had gone ‘too far’.

Pohler 2020b argues that the main coordinative and evaluative tension that CAB and the GTC are facing is between coordination based on familiarity and coordination based on generalization. The distinction between these two modes of coordination is based on Thévenot’s regimes of engagement, in which he differentiates modes of coordination based on degrees of generality. The article focuses on the differentiation between familiarity and coordination that is based on conventions, collapsing the regimes of plan and public justification. This is because the combined analysis of all the three collectives in this study resulted in the conclusion, that tensions between orders of worth were less important in the achievement of ongoing coordination, whereas conflicts mainly emerged between the particular and the general, respectively coordination based on familiarity and coordination based on generalization. The composite relation in this sense is a main contribution of the thesis, in that it explains how collective firms manage to compose relations that are able to mediate between familiarity and generalization.

The analysis in Pohler 2020b distinguishes three levels on which GTC and CAB mediate between the particular and the general.

> (1) In their governance structures, which use formalized rules and procedures, but leave space for particularity.
> (2) In the way they include people who work for them as formal “non-members” in the organization, which allows “non-members” participation in the governance structures as well as the same rights in regards to pay.
> (3) Finally, while both collectives use a division of labor and related, temporally constrained formal hierarchy, they consider their member’s particular needs and use relational work to balance conflicts between particular and collective needs.

While Pohler 2020b suggests, that all organizations have to manage the tension between particular and general, it also suggests, that this tension is central for intraorganizational coordination in collective firms. This is related to the importance of both formal equality, as well as personal relations in collective firms. By declaring everyone equal, it becomes problematic to acknowledge differences. At the same time, if one acknowledges and values differences, it becomes problematic to use coordination that is based on generalization. Being a collective and a cooperative at the same time thus means to acknowledge that members are “equal, not different”, as well as “different, not equal”. It means to acknowledge the particular, situated needs of people, as well as collective, general needs. Collective firms have to balance this tension, they have to make sure that they never ‘go too far’, by either threatening particular goods for the sake of the collective, or threatening the collective for the sake of particular people.

From a perspective of pure logic, this means that collective firms are impossible. We can immediately come up with the boundary cases that will either lead to the dissolution of the collective, or else, its degeneration into an oligarchy. Fortunately, in reality, collective firms are able to develop a pragmatic moral sense, so that in consequence members try to never ‘go too far’. This balance allows collective firms to combine the advantages of flexibility and trust that are related to familiar engagement and the advantage of efficient planning that is related to coordination based on generalization.

In this study, the often noted duality of collective firms is reframed as the need to balance and mediate different modes of coordination. The thesis furthermore argues, that in small collective firms with direct democratic governance, the central tension coordinative and evaluative tension is between coordination based on familiar engagement and coordination based on generalization. With this, the thesis does not aim to replace “social” with “familiar” and “economic” with “general” in the analysis of collective firms, but it proposes a different perspective on their central duality. We already know from OJ that neither the social, nor the economic are pure entities, as they already contain compositions that achieve compromises

between different orders of worth. The are always economic reasons to value the social, and social reasons to value the economic. With shifting the emphasis from social/economic to particular/general, the thesis does not propose that economic reasoning is not central to coordination in collective firms, but that tensions between particular and general arise within, as well as across what is usually considered economic reasoning. The challenges in finding calculations for fair pay result from the uneasiness and uncertainty members of the collectives feel in regards to making things general at the cost of devaluing the particular. This is not a conflict between pay for performance and payment according to needs, it is not a tension between economic and social. Related, a collective firm that has a division of labor but refrains from treating their members as “only workers” does not simply attempt a compromise between social and economic. Both frames could be, and indeed have been, used to argue for either side. A division of labor furthers the collective good, but this also means giving in to market pressures. Considering people in their particular needs strengthens social relations, but it also enhances motivation and productivity, etc. This study proposes that the social as well as the economic can be located on different levels of generalization, and they can be composed of different compromises between the general and the particular. This clarification is necessary, since the main challenges in evaluation processes and intraorganizational coordination that I encountered in my research can not be adequately captured with the duality of social and economic. These challenges can also not be adequately described as tensions between different orders of worth. But they can be captured by looking at the ‘vertical level of complexity in coordination’, the tension between particular and general in coordination.

Limits and Implications of this Study

The results of this thesis contribute to, and open new directions for research, in three different areas:

First, this thesis contributes to the field of valuation studies. The thesis illustrates that in order to mobilize the test for empirical studies of valuation, tests should not

exclusively be seen as linear endpoints, since often they will be intermediary states with varying degrees of stability. Furthermore, the thesis shows that the uncertainty in critical moments might lead to a process that resembles more a collective discovery process than a contention. Further contributions to the field of valuation studies are made by pointing out the central role of legitimate principles of difference and equivalence for successful commensuration, as well as the moral tension between particularity and generalization in standardizing evaluation devices. The findings of this study result from an analysis of collective firms, which due to their democratic governance-structures and values are a specific context for evaluation processes. It would be interesting to understand the influence of different governance-structures on the unfolding of evaluation processes and in particular, how this influences the legitimacy of principles of difference and equivalence.

Second, the study contributes insights for scholarship on the relationship between coordination and morality in organizations, especially research that is inspired by Boltanski and Thévenot's On Justification. The thesis shows, that an understanding of different degrees of generality in coordination, as articulated in Thévenot's sociology of engagements, yields important and also more appropriate insights on intraorganizational coordination than an analysis that only looks at the co-existence of different orders of worth. The study introduces the composite relation, a heuristic concept that allows to understand how different modes of coordination can be mediated by defining and distinguishing different ways of relating to an organization. In addition, the study extends Thévenot's conception of the relationship between coordination and implied goods. The notion of 'going too far' describes a moral orientation that corresponds with composite relations. In their relationship to other people and their environment, people might feel the wish to pursue both general, as well as particular goods. They are then not contempt to settle with "either/or", but are striving for "as well as".

Finally, this study contributes to scholarship on cooperatives, collectivist organizations and collectives. The main contribution this study can offer to the

existing research is a different perspective on what it means to be a collective firm, by looking at how intraorganizational coordination is achieved in practice. The theoretical perspective this study employs allows to understand coordination as something that includes, but goes beyond, formal governance structures. It is furthermore, able to address the role and meaning of moral orientations at different levels of generality. This allows to reframe the often noted duality of collective firms as the need to balance different modes of coordination with differing modes of evaluation. The thesis proposes that the main intraorganizational tension in small collective firms with with direct democratic governance is between coordination based on familiarity and coordination based on generalization. With the composite relation the study helps to understand the practices through which collective firms, despite their central tension between particular and collective goods, are held together.

Existing scholarship on worker cooperatives and collective firms has explored in detail external and internal factors that make it possible to maintain democratic governance in business organizations. Not all of these factors are related to intraorganizational coordination. One of the most important factors in this regard is the challenge of raising enough capital that allows surviving and growing during the first formative years, as well as to deal with unforeseen circumstances in the years thereafter. Cooperatives do not have access to equity capital like stock corporations do, and due to their unconventional character might have harder times getting loans from banks (Dow and Putterman, 2000; Davies, 2009; Whyte and Whyte, 1991). All three collective firms in this study started with a small number of people and grew very slowly, with considerate rates of self-exploitation. Struggling to survive through early years of low wages and self-exploitation seems to be a common feature of the history of many alternative firms (Cornforth, 1995; Neumann, 2008). By highlighting the centrality of the tension between particular and general, this study does not want to understate other considerate problems collective firms may face. Nevertheless, in regards to intraorganizational coordination, the study suggests, that the central tension in most phases of a collective firm is indeed between particular and general. This proposal is, however,

limited to small firms that use collective, democratic governance. Further research could explore the relative importance of the tension between particular and general in larger worker-cooperatives, like the Mondragon subsidiaries (Whyte and Whyte, 1991), where governance structures contain different levels of hierarchy.

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Appendix I: Literature Review Methodology

The main source that was used to construct the corpus for the literature review was Scopus Preview, the largest abstract and citation database for peer-reviewed literature. All search requests were limited by a publication date up to 2019, since this was the year in which the search took place.

Articles using *the economies of worth framework in the field of management and organization studies* where searched for by combining two different searches: 1) Since Scopus does not allow to search for articles that cite books, hence, does not allow to search for journal articles that cite On Justification, a first search request was for articles in the category “Business, Management and Accounting“ that cite Boltanski and Thévenot‘s 1999 article on “The sociology of critical capacity“. This strategy was used because this article summarizes the framework developed in OJ. This search resulted in 92 results. Book chapters were eliminated from the list. To ensure that the corpus only includes articles that actually use the framework, articles that did not include either the terms “convention theory“, “orders of worth“, “economies of worth“, or “justification“ in their abstract where eliminated. Articles by Boltanski or Thévenot were eliminated as well. This resulted in a list of 39 articles. Three additional search request were conducted for journal articles in the category “Business, Management and Accounting“ that use “On Justification“, “Economies of Worth“, “Boltanski and Thévenot“ or “French Pragmatist Sociology“ in their title, abstract or keywords. These search requests resulted in many articles, that were already in the initial list, while others were eliminated because reading their abstract revealed that On Justification was not central to them. In total, the combined searches added up to a list of 61 journal articles. The list was further complemented with two book chapters that discuss compromises in organizations, both from the German edited volume “Organisationen und Konventionen. Die Soziologie der Konventionen in der Organisationsforschung“ (Knoll, 2014). This resulted in a list 63 articles.
Articles using *the regimes of engagement* were searched with the search term “regimes of engagement“ or “sociology of engagements“ in title, abstract or keywords. Again, only journal articles were considered. Since there are much less

articles that reference the regimes of engagement than articles that reference “On Justification”, this search was not limited to articles in the category “Business, Management and Accounting“. The combined searches resulted in 20 articles, of which articles by Laurent Thévenot were excluded. Furthermore, articles were eliminated from this list if their abstract did not give the impression that the article was dealing with either questions relevant to the justification work or the composite organization perspective. In total, this contributed to a number of 11 articles.

Economies of worth framework: Corpus of reviewed literature

Table 5: Economies of worth framework: Corpus of reviewed literature

Authors	**Title**	**Year**	**Source title**
Annisette M., Richardson A.J.	Justification and accounting: Applying sociology of worth to accounting research	2011	Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal
Annisette M., Trivedi V.U.	Globalization, paradox and the (un)making of identities: Immigrant Chartered Accountants of India in Canada	2013	Accounting, Organizations and Society
Annisette M., Vesty G., Amslem T.	Accounting values, controversies, and compromises in tests of worth	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Banoun A., Dufour L., Andiappan M.	Evolution of a service ecosystem: Longitudinal evidence from multiple shared services centers based on the economies of worth framework	2016	Journal of Business Research
Barbe A.-S., Hussler C.	“The war of the worlds won't occur”: Decentralized evaluation systems and orders of worth in market organizations of the sharing economy	2019	Technological Forecasting and Social Change
Barès, F., Cova, B., Farde, G., Salle, R.	Caught in the crossfire of orders of worth: a failed attempt by a small business to reconfigure a French public sector	2019	Journal of Small Business and Entrepreneurship
Barondeau R., Hobbs B.	A pragmatic sociological examination of projectification	2019	International Journal of Managing Projects in Business
Barros M., Michaud V.	Worlds, words, and spaces of resistance: Democracy and social media in consumer co-ops	2019	Organization
Barthod-Prothade M., Muller C., Cristini H.	How can a wine grower articulate the different types of time: The time of the weather, the economic time, and the human time?	2016	International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business

Bertilsson, J., Rennstam, J.	The destructive side of branding: A heuristic model for analyzing the value of branding practice	2018	Organization
Bérubé J., Demers C.	Creative organizations: when management fosters creative work	2019	Creative Industries Journal
Besio, C., Meyer, U.	Kompromisse in Forschungsorganisationen	2015	Organisationen und Konventionen
Boesen M., Sundbo D., Sundbo J.	Local food and tourism: an entrepreneurial network approach	2017	Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism
Bouillé J., Robert-Demontrond P., Basso F.	Measuring the persuasive power of consumerist activism: An experimental study on the polity model applied to food imitating products	2014	Recherche et Applications en Marketing
Bourguignon A., Chiapello E.	The role of criticism in the dynamics of performance evaluation systems	2005	Critical Perspectives on Accounting
Boxenbaum E.	Toward a situated stance in organizational institutionalism: Contributions from French Pragmatist Sociology theory	2014	Journal of Management Inquiry
Brandl J., Schneider A.	Headquarters-subsidiary relationships from a convention theory perspective: Plural orders of worth, arrangements and form-giving activities	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Clement J., Skovgaard Andersen M., O'Doherty Jensen K.	Framework for understanding misleading information in daily shopping	2012	Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal
Cloutier C., Gond J.-P., Leca B.	Justification, evaluation and critique in the study of organizations: An introduction to the volume	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Cloutier C., Langley A.	The Logic of Institutional Logics: Insights From French Pragmatist Sociology	2013	Journal of Management Inquiry
Cloutier C., Langley A.	Negotiating the Moral Aspects of Purpose in Single and Cross-Sectoral Collaborations	2017	Journal of Business Ethics

Dansou K., Langley A.	Institutional work and the notion of test	2012	Management (France)
Dansou K., Langley A.	What's in an App? Investigating the Moral Struggles Behind a Sharing Economy Device	2019	Journal of Business Ethics
De Graaf, F.J.	Competing logics: financialisation and a Dutch cooperative bank	2018	Journal of Management History
Dionne, K.-E., Mailhot, C., Langley, A.	Modeling the Evaluation Process in a Public Controversy	2019	Organization Studies
Friedland R., Arjaliès D.-L.	The passion of Luc Boltanski: The destiny of love, violence, and institution	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Gálvez A., Tirado F., Alcaraz J.M.	"Oh! Teleworking!" Regimes of engagement and the lived experience of female Spanish teleworkers	2019	Business Ethics
Gherardi S., Perrotta M.	Daughters taking over the family business: Their justification work within a dual regime of engagement	2016	International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship
Gkeredakis E.	The Constitutive Role of Conventions in Accomplishing Coordination: Insights from a Complex Contract Award Project	2014	Organization Studies
Gond J.-P., Barin Cruz L., Raufflet E., Charron M.	To Frack or Not to Frack? The Interaction of Justification and Power in a Sustainability Controversy	2016	Journal of Management Studies
Guile, D., Wilde, R.J.	'Articulating value' for clients in a global engineering consulting firm: 'immaterial' activity and its implications for post-knowledge economy expertise	2018	Journal of Education and Work
Huault, I., Rainelli-Weiss, H.	A market for weather risk? Conflicting metrics, attempts at compromise, and limits to commensuration	2011	Organization Studies
Jaumier S., Daudigeos T., De Lautour V.J.	Co-operatives, compromises, and critiques: What do French co-operators tell us about individual responses to pluralism?	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations

Kampen, T., Veldboer, L., Kleinhans, R.	The Obligation to Volunteer as Fair Reciprocity? Welfare Recipients' Perceptions of Giving Back to Society	2019	Voluntas
Kietäväinen A., Tuulentie S.	Tourism strategies and climate change: Rhetoric at both strategic and grassroots levels about growth and sustainable development in Finland	2013	Journal of Sustainable Tourism
Kleppe B.	Managing Autonomy: Analyzing Arts Management and Artistic Autonomy through the Theory of Justification	2018	Journal of Arts Management Law and Society
Leemann R.J., Da Rin S., Imdorf C.	Training networks: A new form of apprenticeship in Switzerland [Les réseaux d'entreprises formatrices : une nouvelle forme d'apprentissage en Suisse]	2016	Formation Emploi
Lendaro A., Imdorf C.	The use of ethnicity in recruiting domestic labour: A case study of French placement agencies in the care sector	2012	Employee Relations
Lindberg F., Fitchett J., Martin D.	Investigating sustainable tourism heterogeneity: competing orders of worth among stakeholders of a Nordic destination	2019	Journal of Sustainable Tourism
Lindberg F., Mossberg L.	Competing orders of worth in extraordinary consumption community	2019	Consumption Markets and Culture
Mailhot C., Gagnon S., Langley A., Binette L.-F.	Distributing leadership across people and objects in a collaborative research project	2016	Leadership
Munzer M.	Justifying the logic of regulatory post-crisis decision-making – The case of the French structural banking reform	2019	Critical Perspectives on Accounting
Nadai E., Canonica A.	The moralization of labor: Establishing the social responsibility of employers for disabled workers	2019	Research in the Sociology of Organizations

Oldenhof L., Postma J., Putters K.	On Justification Work: How Compromising Enables Public Managers to Deal with Conflicting Values	2014	Public Administration Review
Patriotta G., Gond J.-P., Schultz F.	Maintaining legitimacy: Controversies, orders of worth, and public justifications	2011	Journal of Management Studies
Pernkopf-Konhäusner K.	The Competent Actor: Bridging Institutional Logics and French Pragmatist Sociology	2014	Journal of Management Inquiry
Pernkopf-Konhäusner K., Brandl J.	Variations in evaluative repertoires: Comparing employee perspectives on training and development in Germany and Russia	2011	Personnel Review
Ramirez C.	'We are being pilloried for something, we did not even know we had done wrong!' quality control and orders of worth in the british audit profession	2013	Journal of Management Studies
Raviola E.	Meetings between frames: Negotiating worth between journalism and management	2017	European Management Journal
Reinecke J.	Beyond a subjective theory of value and towards a 'fair price': An organizational perspective on Fairtrade minimum price setting	2010	Organization
Reinecke J., Van Bommel K., Spicer A.	When orders of worth clash: Negotiating legitimacy in situations of moral multiplexity	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Richards M., Zellweger T., Gond J.-P.	Maintaining Moral Legitimacy through Worlds and Words: An Explanation of Firms' Investment in Sustainability Certification	2017	Journal of Management Studies
Rolandsson B.	Partnerships with the police – logics and strategies of justification	2015	Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal

Sreekumar H., Varman R.	Vagabonds at the Margins: Acculturation, Subalterns, and Competing Worth	2019	Journal of Macromarketing
Stamer N.B.	Moral conventions in food consumption and their relationship to consumers' social background	2018	Journal of Consumer Culture
Stark D.	For what it's worth	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Strauß, A.	Value-creation processes in artistic interventions and beyond: Engaging conflicting orders of worth	2018	Journal of Business Research
Suckert, L.	Organisierter Kompromiss	2015	Organisationen und Konventionen
Susen S.	Remarks on the nature of justification: A socio-pragmatic perspective	2017	Research in the Sociology of Organizations
Taupin, B.	The more things change... Institutional maintenance as justification work in the credit rating industry	2012	Management (France)
van Bommel K.	Towards a legitimate compromise?: An exploration of integrated reporting in the Netherlands	2014	Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal
Vesty G.M., Ren C., Ji S.	Integrated reporting as a test of worth: A conversation with the chairman of an integrated reporting pilot organisation	2018	Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal
Whelan G., Gond J.-P.	Meat Your Enemy: Animal Rights, Alignment, and Radical Change	2017	Journal of Management Inquiry

Regimes of engagement: Corpus of reviewed literature

Table 5: Regimes of engagement: Corpus of reviewed literature

Authors	**Title**	**Year**	**Source title**
Conley J., Jensen, O.	“Parks not parkways”: contesting automobility in a small Canadian city	2016	Canadian Journal of Sociology
Eranti V.	Re-visiting NIMBY: From conflicting interests to conflicting valuations	2017	The Sociological Review
Eranti V.	Engagements, grammars, and the public: From the liberal grammar to individual interests	2018	European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology
Meriluoto T.	Neutral experts or passionate participants? Renegotiating expertise and the right to act in Finnish participatory social policy	2018	European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology
Meilvang M.L., Carlsen H.B., Blok A.	Methods of engagement: On civic participation formats as composition devices in urban planning	2018	European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology
Gherardi S., Perrotta M.	Daughters taking over the family business: Their justification work within a dual regime of engagement	2016	International Journal of Gender and Entrepreneurship
Centemeri L.	Reframing problems of incommensurability in environmental conflicts through pragmatic sociology: From value pluralism to the plurality of modes of engagement with the environment	2015	Environmental Values
Blok A., Meilvang M.L.	Picturing Urban Green Attachments: Civic Activists Moving between Familiar and Public Engagements in the City	2015	Sociology
Bullinger B.	Family affairs: Drawing on family logic and familiar regime of engagement to contrast "close-up" views of individuals in conventionalist and institutionalist reasoning	2014	Journal of Management Inquiry

Knoll L.	Coping with economic uncertainty. on the pragmatism of the French Convention School [Die Bewältigung wirtschaftlicher unsicherheit. zum pragmatismus der soziologie der konventionen]	2013	Berliner Journal fur Soziologie
Gálvez A., Tirado F.	Telework and regimens of engagement: Women and their critique of face work [Teletrabajo y regímenes de compromiso: Mujeres y crítica del modelo laboral presencial]	2009	Psicoperspect

Appendix II: Commensuration, compromises and critical capacities: Wage determination in collective firms

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Abstract

This paper analyses pay determination as a process of commensuration as well as a process in which commensuration can fail. The analysis is based on an empirical study of two collective firms in Germany and the United Kingdom and their attempts to self-determine fair pay. Due to the formal equality of members and their democratic decision-making processes, these cases are a specifically interesting context for studying the determination of pay. Through the analysis of a failed attempt at finding a formula for fair pay, as well as a fragile compromise formula, a contribution is made to the literature on commensuration and the construction of compromises. This paper also extends this literature, by explaining the obstacles to the creation of a compromise that would go beyond the need for a common interest. Callon and Muniesa's work on calculation is used to clarify the steps that are necessary to move from questions of worth to the assessment of worth and its expression in measures. To introduce the question of legitimacy in evaluation processes, Callon and Muniesa's framework is supplemented with Boltanski and Thévenot's work on critical capacities.

Keywords

commensuration, compromise, calculation, critical capacities, evaluation, wages, valuation

Résumé

Cet article analyse la détermination des salaires comme un processus de commensurabilité, mais également comme un processus au cours duquel la commensurabilité pourrait échouer. Cette analyse s'appuie sur une étude empirique réalisée au sein de deux entreprises collectives, en Allemagne et au Royaume-Uni, et sur les tentatives que ces dernières ont faites pour déterminer par elles-mêmes une rémunération juste. En raison de l'égalité formelle entre leurs membres et des processus de décision démocratiques qui définissent leur fonctionnement, ces cas constituent un contexte particulièrement intéressant pour étudier la détermination des salaires. À partir de l'analyse d'une tentative infructueuse de trouver une formule permettant de déterminer une rémunération juste, et de l'analyse d'un compromis fragile, cet article vient contribuer à la littérature sur la commensurabilité et la construction du compromis. Il enrichit également cette littérature en éclaircissant les obstacles à la création d'un compromis qui dépasserait la recherche d'un intérêt commun. Le travail de Callon et Muniesa sur le calcul y est utilisé afin de clarifier les étapes nécessaires pour passer des questionnements autour de la valeur à son évaluation et à son expression en unités de mesure. Pour introduire la question de la légitimité dans les processus d'évaluation, le cadre théorique établi par Callon et Muniesa est complété par le travail de Boltanski et Thévenot sur les capacités critiques.

Mots clés

Commensurabilité, compromis, calcul, capacités critiques, évaluation, salaires, estimation

‘Determining pay, I don’t know where that comes from. I feel like in all organizations, it‘s just about a finger in the air, in like, crappy organizations, it is very much about, what can we get away with, what is the least amount of money that we can pay this person, and they will continue to be motivated and produce good work? So, that’s not the culture we have and I don’t want it to become that.’
(A member of the Good Tech Collective, one of the companies discussed in this article.)

Wages are the result of a process of commensuration, attempts to measure characteristics of people and their performance according to a common metric (Espeland & Stevens, 1998: 315). If wages are objects of disputes and thus have to be justified, they have to make their underlying calculations transparent in a formula. These formulas usually have to consider that wages are not only a remuneration of performance (merit), but also have to secure the reproduction of labour (need) (Schmierl, 2010). Wage determination thus entails the consideration of multiple dimensions and related values. Merit is an ambiguous idea, and in the context of labour, it can be based on characteristics of people (talent, qualification, experience), on the effort people put in their work (effort, time), or based on performance outcomes (quality, sales, profit) (Voswinkel & Kocyba, 2008). Pay determination is interrelated and contingent on a specific labour contract, that specifies the base of remuneration: piece wage and time wage, for instance, suggest very different concepts and measures of merit.[6] Wage determination thus entails the consideration of multiple dimensions and related values. By analysing the determination of fair pay in two collective firms, this paper shows the inherent multidimensionality of wage determination and the challenge of commensurability between these dimensions.

In their classic paper on commensuration as a social process, Espeland and Stevens (1998) highlight that commensuration is fundamentally relative, since it creates relationships that allow comparison and thereby changes our relations to what we value and alter how we invest in things and people (1998: 319). Pay is never just compensation, it is grounded in shared understandings of social

6 Although the labour contract that defines the legal relationship between the givers and receivers of labour is clearly a central element of understanding the relationship between pay and related ideas of worth, this paper brackets the related questions and focuses on the wage level issue.

relations, which it defines and marks (Zelizer, 1996). An important characteristic of pay is that it simultaneously reveals and creates organisational hierarchies. Wages signal the relative worth of people and their work, and thereby also the core values of their organisations.

The pay determination this paper analyses is set in the context of two collective firms. The cases were selected based on the priority given to democratic methods of control, not on the legal form of the cooperative. The case selection mirrors Rothschild and Whitt's definition of a collective or a cooperative as 'any enterprise in which control rests ultimately and overwhelmingly with the member-employees-owners, regardless of the particular legal framework through which this is achieved' (1989: 2). Since in collective firms members are formally equal, wage determination and thus defining the relationship between the worth of different members is especially critical and problematic.

But it is not only at looking how people and things are commensurated that we can learn about organisational values: it is also by understanding where the boundaries of commensuration are drawn and incommensurability is claimed, which characteristics of people are up for evaluation, and which ones are not. 'Incommensurables can be vital expressions of core values, signalling to people how they should act toward those things. Identities and crucial roles are often defined with incommensurable categories. Believing that something is incommensurable can qualify one for some kinds of relationships' (1989: 327).

As they derive from differently weighted metrics and the fact that they are based on social ideas of worth and needs, wages are a fascinating topic for valuation studies. Furthermore, pay determination and the conflicts and legitimations accompanying them are interesting cases to think about the entanglement of material possibilities and situated moral considerations in evaluation practices in organisations (Brighenti, 2018; Hutter & Stark, 2015). Pay determination is not often studied from the perspective of moral justification. An exception is Stark and Lukács' study (2009) of an intra-enterprise partnership in the 1980s communist Hungary. They studied a group of 18 workers who were self-organised and were running the factory's equipment on the 'off-hours', subcontracting to the parent enterprise and getting orders from outside firms. In their study, which is inspired by

Botlanski and Thévenot's work as well, they discuss how this collective of formally equal workers struggled to find a fair payment system.

Espeland and Stevens write that 'commensuration as a practical task requires enormous organization and discipline that has become largely invisible to us' (1998: 315). Successful commensuration requires that relevant entities have been identified and that there are appropriate calculation devices that allow an assessment of these entities. These calculation devices, furthermore, have to be able to maintain legitimacy in the face of critique. Commensuration thus entails a process that is ridden with prerequisites. To analytically distinguish between different phases and related prerequisites in the process of determining pay, this paper develops a structured, process-oriented approach, based on Callon and Muniesa's understanding of calculation (2005). To introduce the question of legitimacy in evaluation processes, Callon and Muniesa's work on calculation is furthermore supplemented with Boltanski and Thévenot's work on critical capacities (1999; 2006).

In the following, the paper will first discuss pay determination as the construction of a compromise, utilising the work of Boltanski and Thévenot. Second, the paper will introduce the analytical grid, based on Callon and Muniesa and Boltanksi and Thévenot, which will be used to understand the challenge of commensuration in the case studies. Subsequently, the two different case studies will be discussed.

Pay determination as the construction of a compromise

Pay determination is a process of commensuration, since different dimensions and related values have to be considered. Boltanski and Thévenot's work (1999; 2006) offers conceptual tools to understand the processes of commensuration insofar as the critical moments[7] they are interested in are characterised by the potential threat of value incommensurability. Espeland and Stevens, referring to the work of

7 According to Boltanski and Thévenot (1999), a critical moment is when there is a critique of a situation that leads to a deliberate reflection and (re)evaluation.

neo-institutionalists, hypothesise ‘that the most frequent and most durable claims about incommensurability occur at the borderlands between institutional spheres, where different modes of valuing overlap and conflict’(1998: 322). Boltanski and Thévenot argue that there is a limited number of most legitimate common goods and related modes of valuing in modern societies, but in contrast to neo-institutionalists, they don’t localise these goods in different institutional spheres. In their model, different modes of (e)valuation are not related to different social spheres or groups, but to different situations (1999: 365). *On Justification* (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006) develops a framework that describes six ‘worlds’, repertoires of justification based on the central principle of equivalence, that people with critical capacities can mobilise in different situations for critique or justification. Because these worlds are tied to situations, but people are capable of mobilising different worlds, they ‘always have the possibility of denouncing a situation as unjust (even if criticism is unequally easy according to the current constraints they have to deal with)’ (2006: 373). In their book, Boltanski and Thévenot describe two possible outcomes of commensuration processes when there is a threat of value incommensurability and an imperative to public justification: the ‘test of worth in one world’ and the ‘compromise’.

In a test of worth, people and objects are put in their appropriate order, according to a central principle of equivalence that is related to one world. This allows to suspend a dispute and establish a new agreement, based on a just order. A firm could for example decide that wages should reflect formal qualification (industrial worth), in-house experience (domestic worth) or contribution to sales (market worth). However, a dispute about wages will most likely not be settled by a test in one world, but by a compromise.

A compromise suspends a dispute that involves more than one world without settling the dispute in only one of the worlds. The resulting setup is a composite arrangement that involves individuals and things that can be identified in different worlds. Boltanski and Thévenot discuss the example of workers’ rights as a compromise that relates an object from the civic world (rights) with beings from the industrial world (workers). The compromise between the civic world and the industrial world is the foundation for all arrangements that concern labour law and labour movements, where civic and industrial common goods –collectivity and

solidarity, efficiency and productivity– are intermingled (2006: 277, 326). It is thus on a central compromise that the idea of wages is based.

Since in a compromise entities are not unambiguously ordered according to one principle of equivalence, it is easy to point out inconsistencies in the evaluation. The compromise always already entails sources for its own critique. A compromise is therefore a fragile, pragmatic solution to value incommensurability. It does not overcome the tensions between different worlds, but rather, allows to brush off these tensions. There are three factors that allow for a relative stability of compromises:

First, the compromise needs the involved participants to be ‘favourably disposed toward the notion of a common good’ while at the same time, they ‘do not attempt to clarify the principle of their agreement’ (2006). Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) describe commensuration as the construction of a compromise between different orders of worth. They argue that such a compromise is only successful if it can provide a solution to a problem common to various parties: ‘the necessary condition for an agreement to arise […] is the social construction of a problem whose solution could be seen as serving a common interest, despite conflicting worldviews’ (2011: 1412). Second, a compromise can be made more stable by creating objects that are composed of elements from different worlds, and endow these objects with their own identity, so that removing one of the disparate elements would make them unrecognisable. For instance, the compromise of a ‘competitive public service’ is stabilised by the identity of a ‘user’, which encompasses the contradiction between a ‘citizen’ and a ‘client’ (2006: 278ff.). Third, a compromise is easier to achieve and stabilise if the involved entities are ambiguous and can derive meaning from more than one world (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006: 279). This allows, in the absence of criticism and the presence of good-will, to imply an equivalence which would otherwise be regarded as unacceptable. If people for instance agree that wages should be based on ‘merit’, this would still allow to commensurate the merit of people based on different ideas of merit. Boltanski and Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology helps to understand that commensuration and incommensurability are results of a social process, where judgments remain socially indeterminate and emerge only from disputes (Wagner, 1999: 351). The notions of test and compromise highlight that neither

commensurability nor incommensurability can be sufficiently explained by tensions or the absence of tensions between substantive values. Understanding commensuration has to entail an analysis of the situated justifications work represents (Jagd, 2011) that produces commensurable and incommensurables entities.

This article analyses the justification work surrounding the determination of fair pay in two collective firms. The question of justice is potentially more critical in these contexts than in conventional firms. Stark and Lukács emphasise that having a payment system that is considered just is especially important for a collective, since ‘failure to ‘do what’s fair’’ could lead to so much disharmony that it would threaten the very existence of the group’ (2009: 52). In his study on ideas of justice and injustice at work Dubet (2008) emphasises that even though the problem of justice is often talked about in terms of equality and inequality, actually the crucial difference is between ‘just inequalities’ and ‘unjust inequalities’. In cooperatives and collective firms, in principle everyone is equal, which is formally specified by the ‘1 member 1 vote’ decision rule, or even consensus-decision rules. Starting from this, stating any principle of difference in order to distinguish between members is more problematic than in conventional firms. Therefore, the establishment of ‘just inequalities’ is more demanding in this context.

However, in most cooperatives, there are differences between member-workers, even if they are all regarded as equally skilled. Different people fulfil different roles and furthermore, there are differences in the time people spend working for the cooperative, and therefore in the amount of workload and of the responsibilities taken over. There are then always some people who feel they give more of their time and energy to the cooperative than others. These felt differences can lead to critical tensions in light of the ideal of the equality of everyone. For instance, workers in Stark and Lukács intra-enterprise partnership initially paid all workers the same hourly wages. But over time they started to mistrust their peers, suspecting that others were over-reporting. To remedy these emerging tensions, the collective established a new payment system, based on estimates of the hours for each task prior to undertaking a project. The new system, however, soon generated problems of its own. The payment system continued to be a source of

tension in the collective. The disparity between the need for a payment system and its unsatisfactory, quasi-provisional character when viewed from a perspective of fairness is a feature of the two case studies discussed in this paper as well.

Calculation and the creation of commensurability and incommensurability

In this section, I will explain Callon and Muniesa's understanding (2005) of calculation as a three-stage process to clarify the steps that are necessary for successful commensuration. I will simultaneously point out the moral requirements for calculation on each stage that allow to draw differences between entities and evaluate them. Subsequently, I will suggest different kinds of critique related to each of the three stages of calculation that create obstacles to commensuration.

The three stages of calculation

According to Callon and Muniesa, calculation is a three-stage process: first, the relevant entities have to be sorted out, detached and moved in a single space. Second, the entities are associated with one another, manipulated and transformed. Third, a new entity is produced; this can be a sum or an ordered list that links the entities taken into account. The newly constructed entity can leave the calculative space and circulate elsewhere (2005: 1231). The first stage of calculation entails that entities have to be 'sorted out' and 'detached' in order to be able to move to a space of calculation. To understand the moral capacities of actors involved in evaluation processes, this first stage of calculation first needs to establish legitimate principles of differences[8]: in order to 'sort out' and 'detach' employees among all the people working for a firm, for instance, I have to differentiate between employees, freelancers and 'external' temporary workers. These differences are well established and thus I should not have any problems

8 Boltanski and Thévenot discuss the importance of a 'principle of differantiation' for their polity model (2006: 74ff.), but it does not play a role in the further elaboration of critical capacities and tests.

when I attempt to evaluate and remunerate employees differently from freelancers or temporary workers. However, the differences that allow me to differentiate employees from freelancers or temporary workers in terms of remuneration are often contested by labour unions. In the second stage of calculation, entities are associated with one another, manipulated and transformed. Callon and Muniesa use the example of a supermarket as a 'calculative space in which it [the good] can be connected and compared to a finite list of other products. [...] The good has been placed in a frame with other goods. Relations have been established between them, leading to new classifications that allow forms of comparison: the good can finally be calculated' (2005: 1235). The establishment of comparability always needs a legitimate principle of equivalence that determines how entities can be made equivalent. This allows to compare and subsequently rank them, according to an overarching principle of evaluation. In a supermarket, principles of equivalence are materialised in shelves that contain, for instance, products with similar functions –e.g., cleaning products, cooking products and their different prices. In a firm, employees are ordered by their different functions as well– e.g. cleaners, cooks. But the established categories are not necessarily legitimate principles to calculate wages. In the third stage of calculation, 'a new entity must be produced (a sum, an ordered list, an evaluation, a binary choice, etc.) that corresponds precisely to the manipulations effected in the calculative space' (2005: 1231). In Callon and Muniesa's conception, what is usually regarded as calculation is just its third stage: it is only after entities have been singled out and rules on how there connections must be treated have been established that a new entity, an evaluation, can be produced. In this sense, calculation does not necessarily mean commensuration ('the expression or measurement of characteristics normally represented by different units', Espeland & Stevens, 1998: 315), but we could say that commensuration is always a process of calculation.

Creating incommensurability at the three different stages of calculation

How do actors endowed with moral and critical capacities create obstacles to calculation and commensuration? Espeland and Stevens note that the creation of incommensurables is no less a work than that of commensurables (1998: 329).

Understanding how different kinds of critique can hinder commensuration helps to understand this work. By showing which kinds of critiques can be mobilised on the three stages of calculation, we can see that commensuration is always a testing movement that might fail. The first stage of calculation, where relevant entities have to be identified and singled out, relies on a legitimate principle of difference that states if and how differences between entities can be made. In fact, these differences are not always already established or legitimate. There was, for instance, a time where people found it legitimate to talk about ‘the working class’, not allowing any distinctions between workers. In a different context, second-wave feminism was centred around the needs of all women but the underlying idea of a homogenous community of women was later successfully broken up in third-wave feminism, which developed the idea of intersectionality. The direction of criticism is not always towards breaking up collective wholes; indeed, feminism also gave us the idea that, when it comes to child care and parental leave policies, we have to consider ‘parents’ and it should not be legitimate to differentiate between mothers and fathers. Similarly, between 2003 and 2005, in Germany reforms of collective labour agreements in the metal industry and electrical industry dissolved traditional differences in the remuneration between white and blue-collar workers (Kratzer & Nies, 2009). Whether a principle of difference is legitimate or not is contingent on a specific situation and can change over time. If there is no legitimate principle of difference, commensuration fails already at the first stage of calculation, since it is not possible or appropriate to single out entities of a whole.

The second stage of evaluation, where entities are associated with one another, relies on one (or several) principle(s) of equivalence. A principle of equivalence allows to abstract from the particularities of something, in order to regard only the differences that are relevant to the invoked principle (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005). In the second stage of calculation, there are two different critiques that lead to a failure of commensuration. First, commensuration can fail if people cannot agree on which principle of equivalence is appropriate in a given situation. Different kinds of evaluation can be either criticised or justified from the viewpoint of different value-worlds. The second critique is even more radical and concerns the possibility of establishing equivalence per se. This critique is not part of the framework presented in Boltanski and Thévenot’s work (2006), but it is implicit in the literature on commensuration. The inappropriateness of making equivalencies

is usually made on claims about substantive characteristics of people, objects or relationships that render them unique and incomparable. In the second stage of calculation, commensuration can thus fail if people refuse to acknowledge any principle of equivalence or if several radical critiques based on different worlds make deciding on one principle of equivalence impossible.

In the third stage of calculation, two more critiques are possible. The first one denounces the final evaluation by pointing out that ‘external entities’ not relevant to the test and the related world have been included. For instance, if during a job interview, a candidate is asked if she is planning to have children in the future and subsequently does not get hired. The second critique occurs ‘when flaws or faults are noticed and beings are re-qualified or discovered as relevant’ (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 373). What is criticised here is the process of ordering and measurement that leads to a wrong outcome, for instance because measurement devices have been faulty. Table 1: Stages of calculation and related possible critiques.

Stage of Calculation	*Critique*
1. Sorting out of relevant entities	1. Criticising the creation of differences. 2. Criticising the principle(s) of difference used to sort out relevant entities.
2. Creation of relations between entities	1. Criticising the creation of equivalencies. 2. Criticising the principle(s) of equivalence used to create relations. 3. Criticising the relative worth of principles of equivalence.
3. Extraction of a calculation	1. Criticising the execution of evaluation, because external entities have been considered. 2. Criticising the execution of evaluation, because measurement devices have been faulty.

Understanding commensuration for compromises in practice

The case studies discussed in this paper have been conducted for my PhD project, which aims to understand the interrelationship between coordination and evaluation in small collective firms that practice self-governance and consent-based decision making. Of the two cases discussed in this paper, one firm is a cooperative in the legal sense, the other one is formally a network of business partners and independent contractors. The latter, however, gives decision-making rights for all decisions to every business partner, regardless of their specific status.

Due to the highly different characteristics of these collective firms and different contexts and time-spans in which discussions of fair pay took place, the methods of gathering data varied significantly. In the following section, in the discussion of each case study, I will explain the data and data gathering methods I relied on. All of the data were coded in MaxQDA. I initially used a coding scheme that included codes for three categories: (1) codes that were related to discursive movements and inspired by conversation analysis (e.g., explanatory introduction, apologising), (2) codes that were related to justification work (Jagd, 2011) (e.g., critique, industrial worth, compromise), and (3) codes that were related to content (e.g., payment, good collective member). For this paper, I looked at passages that were related to pay determination and critical moments (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1999). After a first phase of going through the respective material and comparing findings across the co-ops, I revised the coding scheme in order to be able to find different opportunities and constraints for commensuration during the three different stages of calculation. In light of the framework outlined above, it is now possible to examine how two different coop collectives have struggled with the tension between the ideal of equality and the actual differences of their members in the context of pay determination. In the first case, which we will call ‘Community Cola Collective’ (henceforth, CCC), there is a failed attempt to develop a formula for fair and differentiated pay. In the second case, which we will call ‘Good Tech Collective’ (henceforth, GTC), such a formula already exists. This formula, however, is a fragile compromise, since there is on one hand uncertainty regarding the calculation of pay based on this formula, and on the other hand, a shared sense of discomfort regarding existing pay differentiation based on this formula.

The CCC Case

CCC is a virtual organisation that supervises the supply-chain for their signature product, a coke with less sugar and more caffeine than usual, as well as beer and lemonade. Members of the CCC are based in different cities in Germany, their products are distributed in Germany and in two neighbouring countries. The CCC was started by a German-wide network of people who were fans of a particular German brand of coke that was not produced anymore and who connected through a mailing list. In 2001, they got hold of the original recipe and the contact of one of the original bottlers. They started by ordering 1000 bottles of coke with the original recipe, and distributed them among their network. At the same time, one of the supporters started talking to two diners in the city he lived, who were interested in selling the coke. The network then realised that they could start producing coke on a regular basis. They have been very slowly but steadily growing from selling 1000 bottles to their members and friends in 2001, to selling more than one million bottles in 2015.

Due to its history, the CCC has a very specific system of distribution that is based on so called ‘ambassadors’. They are people who want to be part of the CCC and act as semi-professional, semi-activist, local salesmen. In every city and every village, in which CCC products are being distributed, this is due to an ambassador who started talking to small retailers, restaurants and bars about the CCC project. These ambassadors get paid on an hourly base for their initial work, and after they have established a network of retailers, they get a percentage of the price of every bottle that has been sold in their respective city or town. Apart from the ambassadors, there are people working part-time in the ‘organisation team’ to ensure the day-to-day operations. During the time of fieldwork, there were five people in this organisation team, supported by 30 ambassadors.

Everyone working for the CCC does so on a self-employed basis. Legally, the CCC is not a cooperative but a network of freelancers, they don’t own their production sites or their distribution network. The founding member of the CCC,

whose official job description is that of the ‘central coordinator’, owns the trademark rights, which is the only thing that can be ‘owned’ about the CCC. They can be best described as the coordinators of a supply chain. Altogether, in 2016 the CCC had 1600 business partners, most important among them the bottler and the manufacturer, as well as a huge number of wholesalers and retailers. Business partners, ambassadors and members of the organisation team are all viewed as equal members of the CCC, with the right to take part in decision making processes. Members of the CCC believe that the economy is a collective endeavour and all affected people should be able to directly influence production. Therefore they organised themselves in large parts through a mailing list and later changed to an online board (in 2016, the online board had 180 registered users). All strategic decisions are discussed within this board, and all decisions are taken by consensus. Theoretically, everyone that feels affected by CCC can get access to the online board and take part in the decision-making processes. However, it is mostly ambassadors and people who are part of the organisation team that take part in these online discussions.

In the beginning of the CCC, people were working for free, but gradually they could start paying wages to the people working in the organisation team and they also started paying ambassadors on a commission base. If there is surplus at the end of the year, it is regularly used to retroactively increase wages. From the beginning, the hourly wages for the people working on the administrative side, as well as the share of the bottle price for the ambassadors, were they same. However, in their 10th year, there was a confrontational discussion on the mailing list because not everyone agreed with the equal pay policy. To avoid amplified tensions over the question of fair pay, the central coordinator hired a social scientist to conduct a study in order to find a ‘formula for fair wages’. The following description is based on the research report of the social scientist and the e-mail discussion that accompanied the study, both before, during and after its completion.

Finding a compromise formula for fair pay

A social scientist was hired to find a ‘formula for fair pay’, which should determine a base salary, and relevant characteristics of people and their work. The salary for

one person would then have been calculated by adding or subtracting appropriately weighted factors from the base salary. Such formula is a compromise between multiple evaluation principles: On one hand, there is a base salary, which seems to be based on the idea of some minimum amount of money that everyone needs to secure one's livelihood. The factors that were to be added are a combination of needs and merit-based factors. The formula was based on the idea that there could be legitimate principles of difference distinguishing between people or their work that would justify to distance from equal pay. It is also based on the idea that these principles of differences are at the same time, or can be combined with, legitimate principles of equivalence that can be used to calculate the relative worth of these factors. By trying to develop this formula, the CCC tried to commensurate the needs as well as the worth of its different members in one single metric. The study identified possible factors for the differentiation of pay and conducted a survey in which participants were asked to weigh these factors. Interestingly, the survey refrained from using an already established principle of difference, i.e. the existing division of labour.[9] The survey was conducted among all members of the CCC –which included everyone on the mailing list, as well as people following the CCC's Facebook account.[10] 46 people answered the survey, among them eight people directly working for the CCC, 9 business partners and 32 end-consumers. The survey asked participants to weigh the importance of criteria that could be possibly relevant to calculate fair pay on a scale from one to four. These factors were differentiated between output-oriented factors (like number of hours worked or added value), input-oriented factors (like qualification or working experience) and needs-oriented factors (like rent costs or children). The results of the survey revealed that there was neither an unanimous reference for a base pay, nor an agreement on the appropriate weighting of factors. The social scientist summarised the average values for aggregation to argue that the factors

9 This was a fundamental problem of the study, since ambassadors are paid based on commission, while the organisation team is paid based on hours worked. Therefore, two very different kinds of work and systems of remuneration were negotiated and discussed at the same time.

10 Note here that for the CCC, everyone who is connected to their products, as a business partner or a consumer, and takes part in the discussions within the mailing list is a member.

that seemed most important to the collective were workload, flexibility and risk. Her interpretation of the study was immediately criticised in the mailing list, as something that should not be used for determining fair pay at the CCC. The study was then discussed at the annual 'offline-meeting' where all members of the CCC meet for two days. During the meeting, the members did not succeed to come to an agreement on a fair pay formula. Instead, they decided on a resolution to keep a model of flat pay, with the exception of supplements for people with children or disabilities. While I do not have material on the discussion during the offline meeting, the study had been discussed within the internal mailing list, from before the start of the study until the end. The e-mail discussion concerned with the formula for fair pay developed over a time period of six months, with 28 contributions from 11 individuals. The people who took part in the discussion were all part of the organisation team, ambassadors or business partners, therefore the arguments brought up in these discussions should be representative of the arguments deployed during the offline meeting.[11] In the following I will use insights from the survey and describe the arguments brought forward in the e-mail discussions to recreate the critiques that led to the emergence of incommensurability.

First stage of calculation: Critique of principles of difference and equivalence

The discussion concerning the fair pay formula had already started when the planned project for finding a fair pay formula was announced. Some members fundamentally criticised this plan, by dismissing any legitimate principles either of difference or equivalence that could be used to evaluate members. One of the discussants described in this way his discomfort with the idea of a formula like this[12]:

> 'I feel very uncomfortable with the idea of a formula for fair pay, [...] a collective should have equal pay for everyone.'

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11 The author attended the offline-meeting twice and could deduce from her experiences that the majority of people attending offline-meetings are people who are not 'just' consumers, but have some business relationship to the CCC.

12 The following quotes are originally in German, translated by the author.

While this member felt uncomfortable with setting up any differences in pay, another member had the complete opposite view: according to her, her pay was fundamentally individual, and therefore, there could be no general formula:

> ‘The question of whether your personal remuneration is fair or not is yours to answer first, and then afterwards you should negotiate with the collective.’

For this member, it is not possible to decide on common principles of equivalence for the evaluation of pay.

Second stage of calculation: Limits to meritocracy and a plurality of principles of equivalence

The establishment of a space for calculation where people can be ranked according to a principle of equivalence is dependent on the legitimacy of meritocracy in general. In Boltanski and Thévenot’s work, a just order is one in which people are ranked according to their worth in one world. Inequalities are justified as long as the differences in people’s rank are related to their differences in contributing to the common good. However, pay is not only about the remuneration of worth, but also about securing the needs of workers. There has always been a needs component in the legitimation of wages –which is reflected in contemporary discussions on living wages–, and therefore a limit to meritocracy. The quest for finding a ‘fair pay formula’ then entails not only the question which merit-based criteria are legitimate, but also what their relative weight in comparison with needs-based factors is and which needs-based criteria are relevant. While the majority of the discussants and survey participants seem to grant legitimacy to an attenuated meritocracy in pay, the appropriate ratio between merit and needs-based considerations remained unclear. The legitimacy of both needs-based criteria and merit-based criteria suggests a possibility for a compromise between the civic, the industrial and the market world. Whereas Boltanski and Thévenot note that they could not find a compromise between the civic and the market world in their sources (2006: 325), this could be precisely a case for such a compromise. According to the results of the survey, none of the input-oriented factors (like qualification or working experience) can form a base for a legitimate meritocracy and formal qualifications (education certificates are not

seen as relevant for instance). The only factors that could constitute a legitimate meritocracy are ‘output factors’ (performance, workload, risk). However, the factors that have exactly the most legitimacy as principles of equivalence, i.e. output factors, are the ones that are the hardest to measure.

Third stage of calculation: The limits to measurability

Commensurability is not only made unlikely because of a radical rejection of principles of difference or because of an incommensurability of values, but also due to practical problems of measurement. One problem of measurability that clashed with ideas of justice was that it seemed fair to most that the people who produce more market value for the collective should also be paid more. However, while many input factors, like education, qualification and experience, can be measured to a broad extent, this is not true of output factors like performance, workload or success. This is, on one hand, because these factors are hard to measure per se, and on the other hand, because the CCC does not have any control or measurement infrastructure set up to monitor its members.

Another problem that most people agreed on was that it is not fair that ambassadors are paid on a commission base. Depending on their location, ambassadors face indeed very different conditions to do their work successfully. It is much easier to acquire and keep customers in a major city where there are many alternative bars, than to acquire and keep customers in a geographically wider area in the countryside, with less bars to start with. However, the CCC is a distributed, heterarchical (Stark, 2009) structure without any control, which makes an hourly-based pay for a large number of ambassadors difficult. No one at CCC would be able or wiling to control how many hours ambassadors are actually working. And since working conditions are so different across geographic locations, no one would even be able to determine if someone practices shirking or not. For that reason, they are more or less forced to make do with a commission-based pay.

In the end, the CCC decided to continue to pay everyone equally, since it seemed impossible to argue for commonly accepted differences between factors and in addition between the value different people, or different jobs, were adding to the CCC. Even though they share a common desire to develop a fair pay formula by trying to clarify how exactly different ideas of worth could be commensurated in a

formula, the members of the CCC ended up in a situation of irreconcilable incommensurability. The failed attempt to find a compromise formula by explicitly asking for an evaluation of possible principles of equivalence is an accurate illustration of the problem of compromises that Boltanski and Thévenot discuss. Boltanski and Thévenot stress that a compromise can only be reached if 'participants do not clarify the principle of their agreement' (2006: 277).

The GTC case

GTC is a cooperative that builds digital applications and websites based in the United Kingdom. At the time of the research, GTC had been existing for 6 years. They use a sociocratic governance model, which means that their work is organised through six semi-autonomous working groups, called 'circles', which meet regularly and are responsible for certain key issues, like design or business development. When I studied this case in 2017, approximately 18 people were regularly working for the GTC. These people are distinguished into three different classes: Members, Collaborators and Contributors. Members are the formal members of the cooperative, they each hold one share of GTC and collectively own it. Collaborators are freelancers who are not members (yet), but they feel committed to GTC and work almost entirely for GTC. Collaborators are involved in the self-governance structures; they are automatically part of the 'collaborators circle' and should additionally be part of at least one other circle. Contributors are freelancers who work to a limited extent for the GTC. GTC started as a limited partnership, in their first year, there were only three partners who had together left a big media company in order to start their own business. The founding members knew each other well and regarded each other as equally skilled. Payment was settled by dividing the revenues by the hours that have been spent working on a project. Each partner then got paid based on the hours she or he had been working. In the beginning, there was thus an equal pay per hour policy, which was justified by the fact, that everyone was equally skilled.[13] When a growing number of differently skilled and experienced people started working for GTC, they wanted

13 This is similar to the reasons put forward for equal pay in Stark and Lukács intra-enterprise partnership.

to continue basing wages on the original principle of equivalence of ‘payment corresponds with added monetary value of work’. For this, they had to change the system of pay determination. Nowadays, GTC have a differentiated pay scale, which is limited by a ratio of 3:1 and a fixed maximum and minimum salary. This constraint on payment differentials is already a deviation from the central principle of equivalence based on market worth. It shows that any kind of meritocracy can only to a limited extent be expressed in the payment. Salaries are calculated as day rates and they are determined for each person individually. Pay is always decided by a consensus of the members.

The Competency Framework: A fragile compromise formula

GTC has the compromise formula ‘Competency Framework’ as a guideline to make an assessment for day-rates. The competency framework is an Excel sheet, which contains six competence areas and related competences in the rows, and a description of competences on five levels in the columns. The competence areas encompass all areas of work at GTC, for instance Coding, Design and Project-Management. Each of the competence areas lists relevant competences. For example, the competence area ‘Coding’ lists the competences ‘Quality’, ‘Innovation’, ‘Communication’, ‘Architecture’. These competences can be rated according to five levels. In order to clarify when, for instance, a coder can be rated as Level 5 in the competence area ‘Architecture’, the Excel sheet provides a verbal description in the respective column:

‘Effectively plans, designs and creates effective server, application, and database architectures for large and complex projects.’

One of the founding members told me that wages at GTC should reflect the value added for the company by a person’s work. However, the competency framework cannot directly relate the level of skills to outcomes of a person’s work. For instance, the competence area ‘Support, training and culture’ lists the competence ‘supporting other members’, where Level 1 is described as ‘Helps other members when asked, prioritising help as appropriate’ and Level 5 as ‘Spots when other members need help and offer their support’. While it is certainly *valuable* to have member-workers who are supportive of their colleagues, it is almost certainly impossible to *evaluate* the value of this support. The problem of linking

competences to monetary outcomes is apparent even for competences that are more closely related to direct work outcomes, like coding. How much will the competence of a coder to ‘effectively plan, design and create server, application and database architectures’ contribute to the successful execution of a project? The competency framework has to be understood as a compromise formula in the sense of Boltanski and Thévenot, it is a ‘compromise for the common good’ aimed at assessing the value of a person’s work in order to determine fair payment. Compromises are fragile, since the principles that they entail cannot be subsumed under one overarching principle of equivalence, therefore ‘a compromise will often be described as not entirely defensible in logical terms, even though it may be preferable to any other solution.’ (2006: 278). The competency framework clearly deviates from the idea of ‘equal pay for equal monetary outcome’, but at the same time, it is not arbitrary, a lot of collective effort has been made to define principles of difference –e.g., competence areas and principles of equivalence– and descriptions of different levels of competence. According to Boltanski and Thévenot, compromises can be worked out more easily if they accommodate qualities that depend on the way they are understood, and may be related, to more than one principle of equivalence. This is true for the notion of ‘competence’, which can be related to different dimensions. The central concept of competence suggests that an equivalence can be made between the work of a designer, or a coder, or a project leader. Furthermore, the idea of remuneration according to the ‘value added for the company’ is an example of an ambiguous ‘figure of the common good’ since this idea can encompass ‘Cheery to have around the office’[14] as well as ‘Effectively wireframes a basic webpage showing key elements and a clear page hierarchy.’[15] Another factor important to understand the role of the competency framework as a compromise formula is that it is not used for automated calculation, but rather through a sociocratic decision-making process by group consensus. Therefore, pay is not only legitimated by an assessment based on the competency framework, but in combination with a consensus resulting from a collective discussion. GTC provides total pay transparency, and

14 Competence Area ‘Support, training and culture’, Competence ‘Promoting, living, developing the GTC culture’, Competence Level 1.

15 Competence Area ‘Design’, Competence ‘Information architecture’, Competence Level 1.

there is a latent controversy over the differently perceived fairness of people's pay. While there is no unanimous opinion on how to evaluate salaries for individual people, and what role the competency framework should play in this, everyone I've asked about the salary scheme thinks that it is not fair to everyone and should be updated.[16] However, this shared understanding did not lead to a critical moment that would have demanded a quick solution. Still, GTC started to plan a survey inside the company to determine how people would calculate fair pay. In the following I will use information I've gathered from interviews and internal documents to explain the problems GTC faces when trying to find a fair way to calculate wages and the fragile, but not yet contested state of the competency framework in this regard.

First stage of calculation: Principle of difference, or which members should be re-evaluated?

At the GTC, the perceived unfairness of pay did not create a critical moment, spurred by a confident critique. One important factor to explain this seems to be that pay is negotiated and decided for each person individually. This means that asking for a pay rise can represent considerable risks. People might discover that their assessment of their own worth is not shared with the others. In a cooperative, where the underlying idea is that all people are equal members, if differences in the assessment of competences and skills become visible, this is potentially more harmful to one's feelings than in a conventional company. Furthermore, for the collective itself, conflicts in terms of evaluation of members by the collective are potentially harmful for shared solidarity and motivation. When I asked one of the members why he would not take up the offer by one of the other members who – informally– offered to reduce his own day rate to substitute it for a pay rise for him and another member, he answered:

'I said to [X] that if he would make a proposal to reduce his day rate, with no other attachments, just, that he wants to reduce his pay rate, then that is ok. I would not mind that. And then, if people decide in another round, that the most important thing to do is think about pay rises, then that's fine as well. But the idea of him

16 During three months of ethnographic fieldwork, the author conducted in-depth interviews with 10 members.

taking a pay cut in order to subsidise my pay is, I don't know. Does not sit right with me. I do understand, why he would want to do that. But I think that, if it was for everyone, that is very different.'

Even though pay is per se individualised at GTC, this member does not want to be the beneficiary of an individual solution. The same member still thinks that he would deserve a pay rise, both due to his performance (merit) as well as due to his increased costs of living (needs), but he is still hesitant to ask for a pay rise and would prefer a general solution:

'I think, even though I think that most people here think they deserve more money, it's not at the top of my mind right now, I mean, given that I've got new costs and stuff that have recently developed because of my flat, it will be something that I need to look at at some point. But it is just not at the top of my list.'

Another member told me that:

'But I also think, I deserve a pay rise. But it is a little bit like a can of worms, so I am like, do I want to open this? Like, should I bother to open this? I think I should open it, yeah, and I will.' And later adds: 'And also, because [a member] was saying that, you know, lots of people told me that they think I should have a pay rise. Part of the problem is that, I need to own that. And I just don't have time for this at the moment. I'm gonna let this as an aim for January. I was also hoping to sell a big project but it has not come around yet. […] And I was kind of using that to kind of justify me getting a pay rise and then I was like 'wait a second, I deserve one, no matter if I sell the project or not'.

Both of these members seem to have legitimate reasons to ask for a pay rise but are still hesitant to ask for it, one reason for that seems to be the risk they take by individually asking for a pay rise and potentially getting a rejection from their peers. The first stage of calculation entails that relevant entities have to be singled out in order to be evaluated. In this case, while there is an understanding that pay overall is not always fair, not even the people who think they deserve higher wages are sure if they are the (only) ones that should be singled out for a re-evaluation.

Second stage of calculation: Conflicting principles of equivalence and limits to meritocracy

A common way to differentiate pay in conventional companies is to differentiate between different job roles. Interestingly, at GTC salaries are not coupled with the

job role, nor the member status. While titles such as project manager, developer or designer are legitimate ways to differentiate between people, at GTC they are not legitimate principles of equivalence in the sense that they can be used to establish a hierarchy of salaries. This is also true for the status of a member, collaborator or contributor. There are considerable differences in the pay rates of members, and furthermore, members don't necessarily have higher day-rates than collaborators or contributors. Thus, day rates are not directly coupled to a status category inside GTC. While the competency framework lists legitimate principles of difference and equivalence, the overall relationship or proportion between these principles is not clear. Furthermore, members of GTC considered needs-based factors like age or having children as legitimate considerations for pay level as well, which are not considered in the competency framework. A preliminary document from the ongoing project of determining a more fair and coherent pay structure states that 'Pay should be based on experience and skill level but also based on life circumstances.' The document also lists among potential additional benefits factors 'pay for mortgage advice' and 'pay for babysitting'. While the competency framework thus offers several principles of equivalence, all based on some idea of merit that can be combined to determine pay, people are hesitant to only consider these.

Third stage of calculation: Limits to measurement

The competency framework is a tool that should make it possible to come to a shared understanding about how to determine adequate pay for individual people. However, its categories and criteria are not clear enough and have in the past led to differing assessments of people's ranking in this framework. While the competency areas and the description of the different levels certainly provide orientation for the assessment of people's worth for the company, it leaves room for interpretation and different assessments. Another factor that seems important to GTC in terms of worth is their personal engagement with and for the GTC, a factor that can hardly be measured objectively, as stated by one of my interviewees:

'And you know, I feel like I am always working, I feel like, on the weekend I am always thinking about GTC, I am always thinking about what we can do to improve or you know, develop things that we've made mistakes on. But those kinds of

things are really hard to measure and I can’t say that no one else is doing it. I am sure there are other people that are doing it, and I am sure there are people that aren’t doing it, but I can’t know that for sure.’

Discussion

Commensuration is a complex process, ridden with prerequisites. It is contingent upon the entanglement of measures and values in specific contexts. An analysis of commensuration therefore needs to understand two different kinds of spaces: On one hand, the calculative space that has to be created –as illustrated in the first two stages of calculation– in order to allow calculation. On the other hand, the context in which the calculative space is created. Drawing on Brighenti's article (2018) on the social life of measures, this context can be seen as a measure-value environment, which is already populated with 'actors, practices, formats, dynamics, transformations and resistance'. The possibility for creating calculative spaces is contingent on the specific nature of the measure-value environments in which they are located. Huault and Rainelli-Weiss (2011) emphasise that a crucial condition for a compromise to emerge from an attempt to commensuration is that the involved parties are united by a common interest. While this is the case with the members of the CCC and the GTC, who all agree on the importance of fair payment, both collectives run into severe obstacles when trying to determine what exactly fair payment means. Collective firms are a context in which pay determination is potentially more crucial and subject to criticism than in conventional firms. In conventional firms, even a very obvious mismatch between a person's worth and their remuneration can remain uncontested. For instance, CEOs of multinational companies earn hundreds to thousand of what their employees earn, but power asymmetries prevent a potent critique of this. The relationship between pay and worth in conventional firms is thus quite often an example of a value-measurement link that Hesselmann and Schendzielorz (in this issue) call indeterminate, where the value that should correspond to a measurement remains unclear. Since in collective firms all members take equal part in decision-making, they are in a context in which it is very likely that a situation that represents a critical moment emerges. It is thus a context that is in some sense more open for radical critique and the potential presence of multiple principles of equivalence. Therefore, this is also a context in which incommensurability is more likely to emerge. These collectives are not only specific cases in the sense that their specific, egalitarian orientations prevent them

from coming up with a wage formula. They are also specific cases because due to their specific governance structures they are more likely to create situations that are characterised by an imperative for public justification. They run into severe obstacles to commensuration, because they seriously consider the moral implications. In this sense, the article draws attention to the importance of understanding the specific context in which incommensurability, as a result of a social process, can actually become relevant. CCC starts from an equal pay system, which leads to tensions between the members. As a reaction, they engage in a commensuration process which is supported by a social scientist. An attempt is made to assess and legitimise the relative importance of a variety of principles of equivalence. This radically open testing movement, driven by all kinds of possible critiques, leads to a situation in which incommensurability seems inextricable. A compromise, which is dependent on people tacitly agreeing on suspending, conflicts with the fact that different principles of equivalence cannot be reached in this situation. The CCC in the end settles with their original equal pay system, which does not need to establish and evaluate differences between the members. GTC already has a differentiated payment system and a compromise arrangement to determine wages that combines a compromise formula, a competency framework, with a consent-based decision-making process. However, the compromise is fragile, due to its ambiguity. This ambiguity stems not only from the combination of different principles of equivalence, but also from the indeterminate hierarchy of worth between these principles. The compromise formula therefore does not guarantee the certainty that would allow people to point out which people have to be re-evaluated based on the formula. Thus, the compromise neither allows certainty in regard to its justification, nor certainty in regard to its critique. However, the competency framework is not arbitrary and established according to a research of a common good and in order to ‘find a formulation acceptable to all’ (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006: 278). The fragile, but not radically contested state of the competency framework leads to a slow process of trying to adjust the payment system, related questions had not been resolved at the time of research.

In this paper I have focused on how and when moral considerations can hinder or support commensuration procedures. By tracing the involved requirements on each stage of calculation, I have identified four factors that make the achievement

of a stable compromise for pay determination unlikely: First, incommensurability can be the result of a radical refusal of setting up differences or equivalencies. Second, it can be the result of a disagreement over possible legitimate principles of equivalence, or their relative worth. Third, a disagreement over the limits of meritocracy, i.e. relative importance of merit-based measures vis-a-vis needs-based measures further complicates commensuration. Fourth, certain characteristics are by nature hard to measure, or need an established infrastructure to be measured.

Conclusion

This article highlights the importance of moral considerations in the process of commensuration even on practical economic matters such as determining wage. Looking at two different collective firms, I have reported from a failed attempt at finding a compromise formula for fair pay, and a fragile compromise formula for fair pay. Wages are measures that establish a relationship between a person, their work, the firm and the society. Wages secure one's livelihood, they motivate the workforce, they signal and remunerate worth. This multidimensionality and ambiguity are acknowledged in the context of the case studies in this paper. Pay is then necessarily a composite measure, a combination of measures. It is the result of a process of commensuration in which different aspects have to be considered and brought into an adequate order. Which aspects have to be considered and according to which principles they can be ordered, are fundamentally moral questions. Attempts to determine (fair) pay thus illustrate that processes of measure making are processes of commensuration which have to consider moral principles. The paper extends extant literature on commensuration and compromises by taking into account obstacles to compromise that go beyond the need for a common interest (Huault & Rainelli-Weiss, 2011). To do so, I have employed a systematic approach for the analysis of commensuration which draws on the work of Callon and Muniesa, as well as Boltanski and Thévenot. This approach allows to treat commensuration as a process of situated, pragmatic action in which values and measures are entangled. In this sense, the article offers a contribution to the field of valuation studies.

One limitation of this article is that, by focusing on the importance of principles of difference and equivalence, it could not do full justice to the French pragmatists' emphasis on the importance of material arrangements for the emergence of calculative agencies. One particular interesting aspect in this regard is that in the process of coming up with a formula for fair pay, considerations of the possibility of measurement already play a role. Therefore, possible principles of equivalence can be criticised by pointing out that there are no appropriate indicators and therefore cannot be included in the formula. Future work could look more closely at the interrelationship between the legitimacy of principles of equivalence and the possibilities for measuring related characteristics.

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Appendix III: Evaluation and the tension between generalization and particularity: The negotiation of supplementary child allowance in a collective firm

abstract

This paper follows the negotiations for a model to calculate supplementary child allowance inside a radical democratic organization based in Germany. This model is conceptualized as an evaluation device: a device that standardizes how people and things are evaluated. To understand the process in which the collective tries to come to a shared understanding of fair supplementary child allowance, the paper utilizes Boltanski and Thévenot's notion of the test. The solution the collective eventually settles on is a compromise between the need for a general solution and the hesitation to use a standardized format to evaluate the financial needs of different parents and their children. By highlighting the tension between the general and the particular in evaluation practices, the paper contributes to studies of evaluation in contexts of moral complexity.

Introduction

This paper follows the negotiations of a model to calculate supplementary child allowance inside a radical democratic organization – the Radical Cola Collective (RCC) – that pays equal hourly wages to all. With equal wages, the RCC originally refrains from evaluating differences of worth, but also differences of need. The inclusion of new members with children leads the collective to reconsider this decision. The RCC embarks on a process of discovery and negotiation to find a model for calculating fair supplementary child allowance.

Analyzing this intra-organizational process of valuation directs attention to the always already present 'highly complex socio-technical orderings involving several actors and instruments' which together perform valuation (Helgession and Muniesa, 2013: 3). Brighenti (2017) has recently proposed to conceptualize these socio-technical orderings as 'measure-value environments', which highlight that 'measure and value exist in an entangled relation' (*ibid*.: 16f). Organizations are one such 'measure-value environment' where evaluation devices have to conform with existing values and norms. The organization this article is concerned with is based on values of radical equality and inclusivity. Theoretically, everyone who feels affected by the RCC is eligible to take part in their decision-making processes. This creates a setting in which there is ample opportunity for competing moral considerations and values to emerge. Negotiation processes in this context are 'hot situations' in which everything can become controversial (Callon, 1998: 260). This makes the study especially interesting to understand valuation as a social practice (Doganova et al., 2018).

The situation in which the collective realizes that it has to find a way to pay supplementary allowance constitutes a critical moment (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999) in which there is radical uncertainty about how to move on. The collective engages in a process in which it tries to move from a shared *appreciation* of children, to the *appraisal* of the share of the costs of raising children that should be paid by it. The challenge is how to translate the appreciation of something into an organizational, monetary valuation practice. This task is especially complex since the object to be evaluated is ambiguous. Zelizer (1994), in her work on the changing social value of children in the U.S., traces how different conceptions of

childhood influence the monetary evaluation of children. In particular, she shows that, when children became economically ‘useless’ and emotionally ‘priceless’, profound interpretative challenges emerged around children.[17] There is a common understanding at the RCC that children are valuable. However, this understanding lacks any explicit formulation to clarify *for whom* exactly children are valuable, *why* children are valuable, and *who* is responsible for ensuring the good life of children. While children may be priceless, raising them is certainly not costless. But what are legitimate costs of raising children? Can some children be more expensive than others?

The task of finding a model for supplementary child allowance is made more complex since a connection has to be made between the value of children and the amount of costs an employer should take care of in addition to the state. Processes of evaluation are fundamentally processes in which relations and their meaning are negotiated and defined (Espeland and Stevens, 1998; Fourcade, 2011; Zelizer, 1994). By negotiating a model for fair supplementary child allowance, the collective is negotiating the employer-employee relationship. Are employers responsible for the costs of employees children? The RCC, which is concerned with being a social collective, has to come up with a shared understanding of how much of the costs of raising children of employees a social collective has to take care of.

The language around valuation is not always clear, and meanings and definitions are blurry in both ordinary language use and academic disciplines. To clarify the different layers of valuation as a social practice, the paper follows suggestions from the field of Valuation Studies, where Beljean and Lamont have proposed to differentiate between evaluation as the process of assessing worth and valuation as the process of giving worth (Kjellberg et al., 2013: 20). Vatin (2013), meanwhile, differentiates between evaluation as assessment and valorization as the production of value. The paper draws on three meanings that are often

17 While Zelizer’s study only looks at the US, similar processes related to a ‘sacralization of children’ have been taken place in Europe as well, i.e. a ban on child labor, and universal compulsory education.

encompassed by the term ‘valuation’ in ordinary language: (1) The RCC is *valuing* children, in the sense of appreciating them; (2) As a consequence, the RCC is looking for a way to *evaluate* the costs of raising children and, furthermore, the share of these costs a good employer should pay; (3) By considering implementing supplementary child allowance, they are *valorizing* children, as such a practice ‘gives worth’ to children in the performative sense in which bonuses, prizes or medals signify value. An evaluation device, then, structures a process of assessment or calculation (Callon and Muniesa, 2005). It determines ex-ante how people and objects have to be evaluated, and it treats all according to the same rules, regardless of their specific characteristics. It achieves what Callon calls ‘framing’, establishing ‘a boundary within which interactions take place more or less independently of their surrounding context’ (Callon, 1998: 248). Furthermore, an evaluation device is used to standardize evaluation, to repeat the same process of assessment for different objects over time. Evaluation is a complex, critical, and highly moral task, especially when ambiguous objects and multiple values are at stake. In evaluation processes, the moral sense of people cannot always be satisfied with the application of universal principles, it might require to consider what is ethical in context (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015). An attempt at standardized evaluation thus entails the moral tension between using general principles and considering what is just in a particular context.

Standardized evaluation is linked to the core function of organizations: it ensures ongoing coordination by limiting uncertainty through coordinating forms that standardize and thus create calculability. Organizations are compromising devices: by combining different values and rationalities, organizations organize (moral) complexity (Thévenot, 1984; 2001). This paper deals with the moral tension between generalized evaluation procedures and their implied sacrifices. This is the tension between what is generalizable and can be measured and what is considered incommensurable and immeasurable. By following the process of negotiating supplementary child allowance, the paper contributes to an understanding of organizational practices and processes through which things get constituted as valuable (Kornberger, 2017), highlighting the role of an organization’s self-image in valuation practices, as well as how the tension

between generalization and particularity can lead to the establishment of compromises.

To understand how members of the collective negotiate supplementary child allowance, Boltanski and Thévenot's sociology of critical capacities (1999; 2006), and specifically the notions of the test and compromise, will be used as heuristic framework. These concepts have been developed in 'On Justification' (henceforth, OJ) (2006), as well as in further work of Boltanski (2011) and Thévenot (2001). In organization studies, the test and the compromise have been used to explain the maintenance of legitimacy in public discourses (Patriotta, Gond and Schulz, 2011; Taupin, 2012), as well as the compromising of conflicting values in the contexts of public management (Oldenhof, Postma and Putters, 2013), entrepreneurs in biotechnology and sustainability markets (Kaplan and Murray, 2010; Suckert, 2014) and knowledge commercialization (Mailhot and Langley, 2017). Of particular interest for the purposes of this paper are studies influenced by OJ that are concerned with processes of commensuration and analyze the emergence, critique and legitimization of calculative or evaluation devices (Annisette et al., 2017; Fourcade, 2011; Huault and Rainelli-Weiss, 2011; Reinecke, 2010). Using the notions of the test and compromise will illuminate the complex entanglements between values and measures in organizational valuation practices.

In the following sections, the paper will give an overview of the economies of worth framework developed by Boltanski and Thévenot (2006), outline the concepts of test and compromise, and discuss studies of evaluation devices that utilize Boltanski and Thévenot's framework, before turning to the case of the RCC.

The economies of worth framework: Tests and compromises

Boltanski and Thévenot's 'On justification' (2006) develops a framework to explain the competences that enable actors to make critiques or to justify themselves in the face of critique. In a dispute, actors use principles of equivalence that make it possible to assess the relative value of the people and things engaged in a dispute, or their worth. OJ introduces six orders of worth that can serve as frame of reference in a dispute, and each of these orders specifies a form of common good. These orders of worth construct a model of a society that is just because it is

a meritocratic society in which members are ordered according to their worth, determined by their contribution to the common good. In the civic polity, for instance, the worthiest people are the ones that are concerned with the interest of all and can embody the general will. In the market polity, the worthiest people are the wealthy, who maintain competition in a marketplace. Based on the polities, OJ develops 'common worlds' (*ibid*.: 130ff), which are historically developed, socio-material instantiations of orders of worth, inhabited by qualified persons and objects. It is a necessary step for the framework to include the modeling of critical competences since it allows us to pay attention to material devices and objects that can be used to demonstrate, test, criticize or legitimize worth in a situation. In the civic world, for instance, the highest states of worth are attributed to collective persons and their representations; important subjects are parties, public collectives and elected officials; important objects are rights, legislation, order, program; and the state of worth is tested through mobilization or democratic votes. Cloutier et al. (2017) note that OJ has been a catalyst for sociological developments in valuation studies and offers a useful conceptual apparatus to study valuation and evaluation both within and across organizations.[18] In order to understand the process by which the collective tries to come to a shared understanding of a fair model to pay supplementary child allowance, this paper uses Boltanski and Thévenot's notions of the test and the compromise.

Boltanski and Thévenot developed the notion of the test to explain how people can move from a critical moment in which there is a disagreement regarding the appropriate order of beings in a situation to a moment in which the dispute has been resolved. A central principle of equivalence, the higher common good of each of the common worlds, determines how test formats can be established. Each world thus entails its own standards for proving the value of any object or idea. In each world, different objects and ideas are relevant for the testing of worth.

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18 For a general overview of research inspired by OJ in Organization Studies, see the introduction to the *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* special issue on 'Justification, evaluation and critiques in the study of organizations' (Cloutier et al., 2017).

OJ defines two different tests, as a result of two different critiques of a social order: a ‘radical critique’ and a ‘reformative critique’. A radical critique leads to a ‘clash of worlds’ in which the adequate way to evaluate a situation is not certain anymore. For instance, if payment in a firm is primarily based on formal qualification, an exceptional salesman without any higher education might criticize the way that wages are determined from the point of view of the market world, in which a university degree is not of relevance, unless it leads to more sales. In order to come to an understanding regarding the adequate state of the world, the involved participants will have to decide on one order of worth from which to evaluate the situation at hand. Thus, they have to conduct a ‘test of order of worth’ (Dansou and Langley, 2012: 511). A ‘reformative critique’, meanwhile, does not radically criticize the order of worth that is underlying an situation, but rather criticizes the correct execution of evaluation. For instance, a person with a PhD claims that he has been falsely put into a category together with colleagues who only have a master’s degree. A reformative critique may lead to a ‘test of state of worth’ (*ibid*.) in which people move from a dispute to a new agreement by bringing people and objects in their appropriate order, according to a central principle of equivalence that is related to one world.

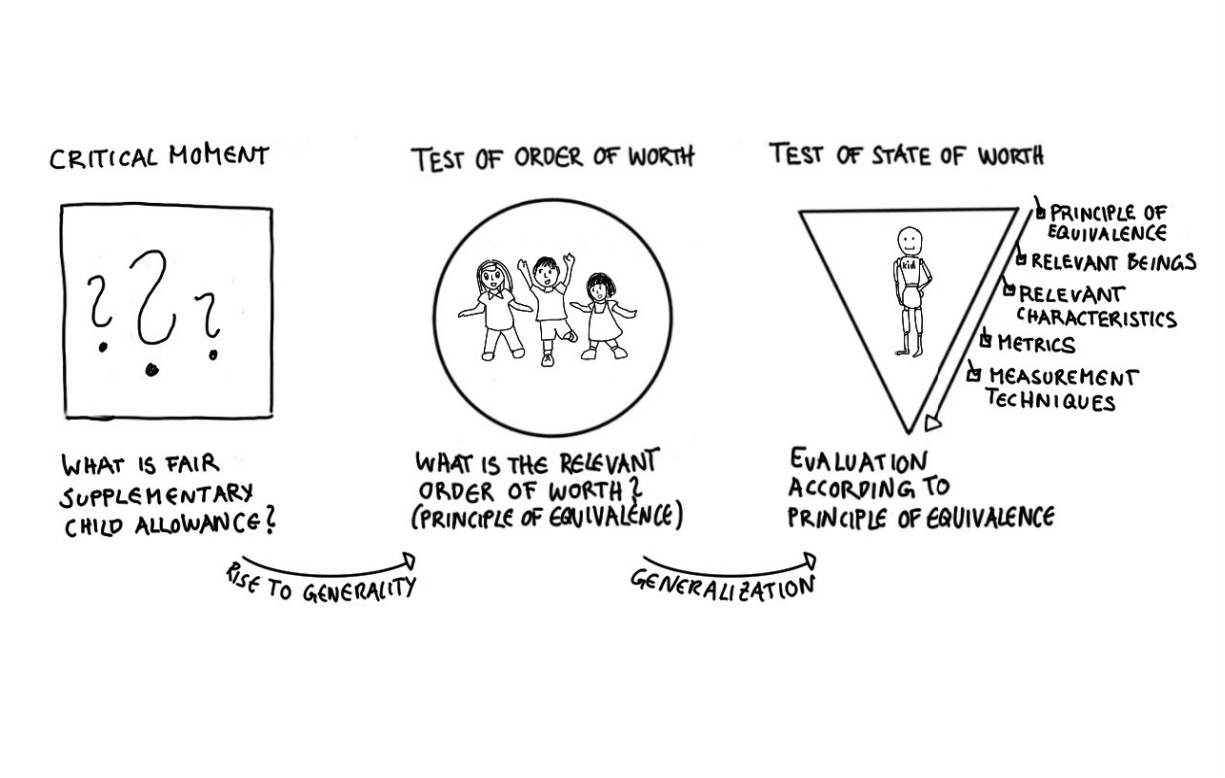

Figure 1: Ideal-typical movement from critical moment to test of state of worth

Dansou and Langley (2012) argue that the notion of the test allows us to examine three key dimensions related to how actors question or reproduce constitutive value frameworks: agency, relationality, and temporality. In order to mobilize the test for empirical studies, and to make use of the potential of the conceptual apparatus of Boltanski and Thévenot's pragmatic sociology of critique, tests should not be seen as linear endpoints but as 'temporary truces' with varying degrees of stability (Reinecke et al., 2017).

In their study of the evolution of biotechnology, Kaplan and Murray (2008) argue that the shape of this field, initially uncertain and equivocal, emerged through the resolution of contests around multiple interpretations of the value of its technology. The central task of entrepreneurs in biotechnology was to actively construct and reconstruct justifications for the value of their firms by arguing for particular tests of value and mobilizing evidence to satisfy those tests (*ibid*.: 12). Kaplan and Murray describe a discovery process spanning three eras, in which the predominant test formats and the respective interpretations of value and formats of evidence were

contested and changed. Only after thirty years in which test arrangements were contested, changed and adapted, a stable definition of the field of biotechnology emerged. The stabilized field is a compromise constituted through a complex network of interactions between organizational actors with different rationalities (*ibid*.: 36).

Compromises between different rationalities are a central concept in Boltanski and Thévenot‘s sociology of critical capacities. A compromise suspends a dispute that involves more than one world without settling the dispute in only one of these worlds. The resulting setup is a composite arrangement that involves persons and things that can be identified in different worlds. A compromise is less stable than an agreement based on a test in one world. Since in a compromise entities are not unambiguously ordered according to one principle of equivalence, it is easy to point out inconsistencies in the evaluation. A compromise needs the involved participants to be ‘favorably disposed toward the notion of a common good’, while at the same time they ‘do not attempt to clarify the principle of their agreement’ (*ibid*.: 326). Compromises can be made more stable by the creation of objects composed of elements stemming from different worlds which are endowed with their own identity ‘in such a way that their form will no longer be recognizable if one of the disparate elements of which they are formed is removed’. An example, here, is the compromise object of a ‘competitive public service’ that entails the higher common principles of the civic world (public service) and the market world (competition) (*ibid*.: 278).

According to Thévenot (2001), all organizations are fundamentally arrays of compromises, ‘compromising devices’ between different repertoires of evaluation. Organizations achieve a compromise and coupling between different practices and their respective rationalities by combining devices (*ibid*.). With this, organizations create structures that are able to deal with (evaluative) ambiguity (Knoll, 2014) and allow them to overcome the uncertainty and tension that emerges from the simultaneous presence of different values.

Evaluation devices as compromises that achieve generalization over time and space

In this paper, a model for supplementary child allowance is conceptualized as an evaluation device. An evaluation device standardizes how people and things are evaluated. It is what Thévenot (1984) calls an investment in forms, a rule that supports a stable connection and the establishment of equivalency and calculability between different entities. Form investments generalize relations between actors and their environment over time and space, specifying what has to be done in a given situation and thus making coordination less uncertain and less costly. Form investments thus sacrifice ‘particularization or characterizations of entities’ (Thévenot, 2011: 41) in order to facilitate such coordination. A wage payment scheme, for instance, can specify that workers will be remunerated by hours worked, which means that their actual performance is not evaluated, or by piece work, which means that their time spent working for the company is not evaluated. Every evaluation device sustains a certain form of evaluation which is based on specific principles of equivalence (time, piece) and, at the same time, excludes other possible principles. In this sense, evaluation devices can be either test arrangements based on one order of worth or, conversely, they can be compromises based on different principles of equivalence.

In most empirical situations, evaluation devices have to achieve a complex commensuration between different principles of equivalence in order to sustain standardized ways of evaluation. The compromise is a useful concept to understand commensuration, which is ‘the expression or measurement of characteristics normally represented by different units according to a common metric’ (Espeland and Stevens, 1998: 315). For example Reinecke (2010) analysesthe determination of Fairtrade minimum prices for coffee as the establishment of a compromise between different orders of worth . In the beginning, when Fairtrade products where not marketed to a mainstream audience and significantly smaller, fair prices were established in face-to-face negotiations between producers and independent fair trading organizations, which created personal, long-term relationships based on trust and mutual recognition. These personal negotiations were later substituted with a formalized price determination based on the Cost of Sustainable Production methodology (CoSP), which calculates the cost of production. The CoSP methodology is an evaluation device,

in the sense that is sustains a standardized way of evaluating the situation of different coffee producers.

Since evaluation devices create categories and standards, they are never just pragmatic, but also ethical and political choices since ‘each standard and each category valorizes some point of view and silences another’ (Bowker and Star, 2000: 5). An evaluation device renders certain characteristics measurable and others immeasurable, or not worth measuring. An evaluation device thus entails tradeoffs between different values, and between generalization and particularities in a given situation. By abstracting from particularities and creating general categories, evaluation ‘flattens’ the world (Kornberger, 2017: 19). Regardless of the underlying principles of evaluation, all evaluation devices express a specific idea of justice based on the notion of equality, where all people/objects/situations have to be treated equal if they share certain characteristics. To come to justifiable agreements and orderings, people have to ‘divest themselves of their singularity and converge towards a form of generality transcending persons and the situations in which they interrelate’ (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 363). However, by considering only that what is or can be made general, people lose the ability to consider what is particular and might be incommensurable or immeasurable. Considering particularities and context might be a part of an ordinary sense of justice. From this viewpoint, it may seem unjust to abstract from the particularities of something in order to measure only specific characteristics. Thus, the tension between two different moral orientations – focused on either generalization or particularity – might be an obstacle to the development and application of an evaluation device.

In her study, Reinecke analyses tensions regarding the calculation of minimum prices for coffee and the adequacy of CoSP as an evaluation method for a large number of coffee farmers with differing production and cost structures:

> What level of labor costs should be used? What was a decent wage in different local contexts? Whose labour should be taken into account? The labour of the farmer, or the labour of his entire family? What did

> sustainability mean? And what was sustainable – compared to inefficient production? (2010: 574)

The resulting compromise combines the CoSP methodology with democratic decision making of all stakeholders. Reinecke interprets the result as a compromise between the industrial world on the one hand, in which productivity and efficiency are values measured by standardized criteria, and the civic world on the other, where the collective interest expressed through formal and democratic procedures is valued. Considering the inherent tension between generalization and particularity in evaluation devices, the result can also be interpreted as a compromise between generalization and leaving space for the negotiation of particularities. It therefore combines an evaluation device that is based on generalization with a procedural rules for decision making, which integrates the particular voices of different stakeholders and leaves room for considering particular circumstances *in situ*.

Annisette et al. (2017) describe the development of an evaluation device for large-scale capital investment projects of a water utility in Western Australia as a 'test of worths in compromise' that calculates the financial, social and environmental impact of a project. This compromise device represents a site for ongoing critique, targeted at the mechanics of calculation, i.e. the inclusion of appropriate objects and measures. One of these critiques targets the fact that Aboriginal cultural and heritage issues were not included in the valuation. In response, the developers of the evaluation device argue that certain types of values 'are not appropriate values to be monetized' (*ibid*.: 231). Instead of trying to integrate everything that is deemed valuable in the evaluation device, the developers acknowledge that some environmental and social costs and benefits cannot be monetized or may be inappropriate to monetize. The developers therefore argue that the evaluation device itself should play an important, but not exclusive, role in the decision making process and should be supplemented by other tools, such as multi criteria analysis (*ibid.*). This study is another example of the combination of an evaluation device with a less standardized method that is better able to include incommensurable values in the evaluation.

Both studies by Reinecke (2010) and Annisette et al. (2017) analyze a context in which there is a high potential for contestation due to the need to come to an agreement which is considered fair by a variety of different stakeholders. In both cases, an evaluation device is contested and has to be supplemented by methods that allow one to consider particular situations and characteristics that cannot easily be generalized. In the following, this paper analyses a context that bears similarities to Reinecke and Annisette et al.'s studies. The RCC is a collective that has to come up with an evaluation device for calculating supplementary child allowance that is considered fair by a variety of people. The collective, however, fails to develop such a generalizing device, and instead settles on a device that signifies worth but refrains from evaluation. It thus achieves a compromise between generalization and particularity.

Methods and case

The Radical Cola Collective (RCC) is a virtual organization that emerged out of a collective of loosely coupled people, connected through the internet. These people wanted to create an economic organization which satisfied their ideas of a just economy. One of their central ideas is that the economy is a collective endeavor and therefore all people affected by a company should have the possibility to directly influence production, including suppliers, subcontractors and wholesalers, as well as end-consumers. At the center of the RCC is a compromise between the civic, the industrial, and the market world. On one hand, it is a cooperative in which equality and solidarity are important (civic worth), but it is also an organization that uses planning methods for coordination and efficiency (industrial worth) and an organization that cares about its survival on the market and considers prices and costs (market worth).

The RCC organizes the supply-chain for their signature product, a cola with less sugar and more caffeine than usual, as well as beer and lemonade. It is based in Germany but also sell their products in two neighboring countries. It has been very slowly but steadily growing from selling a 1000 bottles to its members and friends in 2001, to selling more than one million bottles in 2015. The RCC has a very specific system of distribution that is based on so-called 'ambassadors'. These are people who want to be part of the RCC and act as semi-professional, semi-activist,

local salesmen. In every city in which the RCC's products are distributed, this is due to an ambassador who started talking to small retailers, restaurants and bars about the RCC project. Apart from the ambassadors, there are six people working part-time for the RCC on day-to-day operations. All the other people involved in the RCC network are business partners, like the bottler and the manufacturer, as well as the wholesalers and retailers. In keeping with its conviction that the economy is a collective endeavor, the RCC organizes itself in large part through an online board where decisions are taken according to consensus. This means that decisions are taken as long as there is no strong rejection in the form of a veto. Theoretically, everyone who feels affected by the RCC can access the online board and take part in the decision making process, although it is mostly people who directly work with or for the RCC who take part in these online discussions.

The RCC combines characteristics of a business with a social collective as well as a social movement. While it has been selling cola, lemonade and beer for more than 15 years now, throughout these years the RCC distinguishes itself from conventional businesses. Membership is open, in principle, to anyone; community members are geographically dispersed; and decisions are taken according to consensus and adhere to a broad agenda of anti-corporate activism and sustainability. The RCC pays equal hourly wages to all, that is, the members of the organization team and the members of the collective who do project-based work, like updating their website. The RCC decided that everyone is equally worthy, a decision that is – although the word 'equal' suggests otherwise – not based on an actual belief in equivalence, but a sensibility towards the particular, individual and incommensurable contributions of everyone working for the RCC. According to Espeland and Stevens, 'incommensurables can be vital expressions of core values, signaling to people how they should act toward those things. Identities and crucial roles are often defined with incommensurable categories. Believing that something is incommensurable can qualify one for some kinds of relationships' (1998: 327). By paying equal wages, the RCC signals their core values and secures an identity that is based on collective solidarity. With equal wages, the RCC originally refrained from setting up differences of worth, but also of need, between them. This decision was questioned, however, when a father and

potential new ambassador for the RCC asked if he would get the same pay as people without children.

Drawing on the analysis of online discussions, this paper will illustrate how the tension between generalization and considering particularities is negotiated during a ‘critical moment’ in which there is uncertainty over an adequate evaluation device for supplementary child allowance. The negotiation of supplementary child allowance has two parts. The first part of the negotiation is an email conversation with 30 emails over 7 days with 9 participants. During this discussion, people decide on an evaluation device to calculate supplementary child allowance, although no one ends up claiming child allowance. The second part of the negotiation happens a year later, when a freelancer who is supposed to do project-based work for the RCC asks for child allowance. During this second part, the evaluation device is tested by calculating its concrete outcomes, which leads to a radical critique and eventually a new proposal. Since the RCC has in the meantime switched to using an online board, the second phase lasts for 41 days, with 32 posts and 6 participants. Of this 6 participants 3 have been involved in the first phase as well.

The material of both discussions has been analyzed with MaxQDA using a coding scheme that included codes for three categories: (1) codes that were related to discursive movements and inspired by conversation analysis (i.e. explanatory introduction, apologizing), (2) codes that were related to justification work and testing (i.e. critique, industrial worth, compromise), and (3) codes that were related to content (i.e. payment, good collective member).

Testing for supplementary child allowance

The use of Boltanski and Thévenot’s framework for conducting the analysis of the discussions showed that people did not follow the ideal-typical route from uncertainty to deciding on relevant worlds and eventually to a test of state of worth. Instead, their negotiation resembles a discovery process: at stake was not only who should be evaluated and how, but also it if it was possible to develop a fair model for all situations in the first place.

Phase One: Questioning the justness of generalization, but still adopting an evaluation device from family law

Shortly before this discussion happens, it was decided that ambassadors who work for the RCC should get their working hours paid in order for them to establish a network of customers. A father of three children asks one of the core-members (Udo) if he would get the same hourly wage as all the others if he would start working as ambassador. Udo in turn asks the collective whether they ought to think about adding supplementary child allowance to their salary scheme and how much it should be:

> We decided that we will pay new ambassadors the hours they have to work in the beginning to set up a network. So now we have the first ambassador who asks (rightfully so) if he will get paid as much as everyone else, although he has three children. Without really knowing what would be fair, I told him I would say something like ‘additional five Euros per child‘, but this is just me guessing. Should it be more, should it be less, should it decrease with every additional child? And can we as the RCC afford to pay this? These are complex questions, but we have to provide an answer to this potential ambassador.

This open question sets up a critical moment in which there is uncertainty over the correct amount of supplementary child allowance. The question *if* the RCC should pay extra to parents was already decided at an annual meeting a few months before. Even though Udo does not question the necessity to pay, he seems to be inclined to find a solution that weighs the survival of the company (‘can we afford to pay this?’) with the importance of some idea, though not explicitly stated, of justice (‘without really knowing what would be fair’*).*

The first response to Udo’s question comes from Theodore, who thinks that it is in principle important to have a ‘social component’ in the payment scheme. However, he highlights that the RCC will never be able to create a scheme that does justice to every individual case, not least because there are also public child benefits:

> On one hand, there is a system of public child benefits, but we also have injustices in exactly this system (single parents have to pay more taxes than couples, people who are in the highest income class receive child benefits as well). We can‘t account for all of these differences and compensate for injustices. We would have to collect so much information for each individual case to achieve justice for each individual case.

Thus, the tradeoff between treating particular cases only and using general formulas is present already from the start of the discussion. Theodore continues with a proposal for the amount of child allowance: 30 percent supplement for the first child, 20 percent for the second child and 10 percent for the third child. Even though Theodore thinks it is not fair to use a general solution for each particular case, he weighs the coordination savings of an evaluation device against the costs – in terms of time and resources – and introduces a compromise between his awareness of particular circumstances and the concession that the RCC needs a general solution.

Udo in turn asks if someone with children could confirm that more children are related to decreasing marginal costs. The father of three answers that there is a decrease of costs to some extent and that he would be OK with the 30%, 20%, 10% model. At this point. Karin adds that the father of three is not the only person with children at the RCC, since she has been part-time-mother of her partner‘s children for over 2 years now and also contributes to the payment for these children‘s expenses for vacation, education and hobbies. Next, Udo wants to draw a line between one’s own children and children that someone feels responsible for. This is countered by Anna, who criticizes Udo for sticking to an outdated idea of family:

> I think it would be extremely unfair, in a time of patchwork families and alternative family concepts, to punish people who can’t have children of their own, or fall in love with someone who already has children, or who are homosexual and adopt children.

This exchange between Karin, Anne and Udo shows that the question of the relevant beings that should be included in the test has not yet been exhausted. While the idea seems to have been to pay child allowance for parents, it is not clear who counts as a parent. Udo responds that he did not know that Karin is actually living with her partner's children part-time and adds that the supplementary child allowance should of course apply to patchwork parents as well. He says that he has learned that there is another member of the RCC with four children, so when they decide on supplementary child allowance it will be very expensive, but he still thinks it is important.

> If we want to be a socially minded project, that is a part of it. In this case, the ambassadors will just have to become even more reliable and efficient.

Here we can see that it is not only the question of who parents are and how much children cost that is put to a test in this discussion. The question of child allowance is also a test of the nature of the employer. If the RCC wants to be a 'socially minded project', it has to pay an adequate amount of child allowance. Next, Udo actually calculates what the 30:20:10 model would mean in absolute terms and does not think it would be a good model:

> The 30:20:10 percent model was just an estimation that Theodore threw in, and it seemed to make sense for the potential new ambassador. However, did any of you actually calculate what this means in absolute numbers? For someone working full-time and calculated with 15 Euro per hour, 30 percent means 720 per month and 10 percent 240 per month. This is a complicated topic because there are also public child benefits and reliefs and, therefore, children don't have to be supported by their parent's income alone. But still: To me, 720 per month seems too much and 240 and not enough. What do you think?

Udo puts the proposed evaluation device to a new test by calculating what it would actually mean. He doesn't like the outcome and, though he can't actually explain *why* 720 is too much and 240 not enough, he tries to delegitimize the device by

pointing out that it was just something someone threw in. Again we can see that he is worried about the status of the RCC as a good employer who, it seems, has to make sure that their employees earn enough to cover the cost of their children. Martin, not responding to Udo, but asking another fundamental question, wonders why there should be a specific consideration of the situation of people with children and not also other situations where people have more need. He thinks that parents are not necessarily more entitled to additional remuneration than people who are engaged in other activities that are for the common good, such as voluntary work. Martin, like Karin before, criticizes the determination of relevant beings for the test. To him, it is not only parents who deserve supplementary allowance, but all people who contribute to the common good, which is framed according to the civic order of worth.

Udo counters that voluntary work is voluntary and can be done flexibly and to varying degrees, whereas people cannot decide how much care they want to give to their children, or whether they want to care for ill relatives. He asks if they should include care work for relatives in their deliberations. Beppo, a father of two children, wants to clarify that not everyone has increased costs due to children because, for him, the child benefits paid by the state are already sufficient. He proposes to use the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* (Düsseldorfer Table), developed by judges specialized in family law in order to calculate alimony payments, as orientation for the rates of supplementary child allowance and only pay supplementary child allowance if people explicitly ask for it. But Beppo's contribution also contains a critique of generalization: while he thinks he does not need supplementary child allowance, he does not want to speak for all other parents. His proposed compromise between generalization and particularity is to pay child allowance only when people explicitly ask for it and to use an evaluation device from family law, thus combining civic, domestic and market orders of worth.

Udo likes the proposal and formulates a possible resolution, namely, to use the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* only on the condition that people ask for child allowance. As a reaction, three people raise concerns because to them it would be fairer if people had to individually propose their own wages, since one solution for all is by definition unfair to individual cases. For instance, Arno says:

> My ideal would be that everyone who works for the RCC and wants money for their work can negotiate their wages freely with the collective […] the person can ask for what they actually need, not some approximate value derived from some table. I think it is kind of awkward to say that we all get equal wages, but because we know this is not fair under this or that circumstance we pay +X percent and actually we know, that this is still not really fair.

Udo reacts by drawing a line between a decision for the same wages for everyone and a decision for paying higher wages to people with children. Regarding the same wages for everyone, he recalls the discussions they've already had where, in the end, they decided that all people who work for the RCC are equally valuable. In the end, there is no veto against Udo's proposal for resolution.

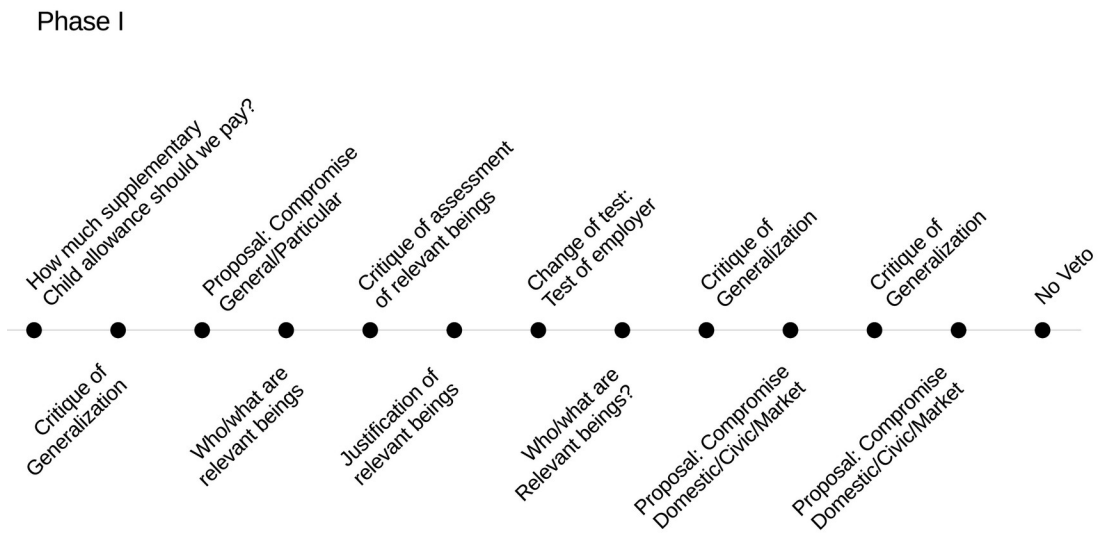

Figure 2: Negotiation of Supplementary Child Allowance, Phase I

This first phase delivers three insights that are relevant for a sociology of critique and valuation. First, inside a critical moment, there might be the need to negotiate two different test arrangements at the same time: the search for fair child allowance involves a test of the RCC as good employer, as well as the costs of children. Second, while trying to figure out a test arrangement, people might realize that they have to clarify or change the relevant beings that should be tested. In the beginning it is neither clear if only parents deserve additional pay nor what exactly qualifies one as a parent. Third, people might not always consider 'a rise towards generality' as just. In this discussion, many people voice a critique of generalization as unjust. However, most are also willing to settle with a compromise between generalization and particularity. These compromises involve a standardized model which is supplemented with methods that open up a space for considering particularities in the evaluation.

Phase Two: Fundamental critique of calculation device, questioning the justness of generalization and resorting to a compromise

Phase 2 starts when Kate, the accountant, opens a discussion thread in the board in which she reminds everyone that the decision has been taken to pay supplementary child allowance. She then calculates what this would mean in absolute terms and asks if people are still OK with this. She adds that this has not been applied yet, but that a potential contractor has asked for child allowance. Frank, the freelancer with children who will be doing project work for the RCC in the future, then asks if everyone was aware of these sums when they decided on the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* as a reference point for the supplementary child allowance. While the amounts seem reasonable to him (he would get approx. €8.50 per hour more than the others), they are also quite high. Kate responds that for someone working full time, the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* would mean an additional income of €522 per month for a small child and she thinks this is too much. Instead, she proposes a pay raise for everyone to €20 per hour:

> In general, I think we should pay everyone €20 per hour, regardless if they have children or not. This will save us individual administration

> efforts and freelancers don't have to tell us how many children they have. :-)

Here, we can see something that already happened before: an evaluation device is tested by looking at its actual outcomes and then criticized, not for the principles of methods of calculation, but because the outcome does not 'feel' right. Furthermore, Kate proposes a new evaluation formula that would mean higher, but equal, pay for everyone, a proposal that is accompanied by a reference to efficiency and transparency. Next, Theodore criticizes the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* because it is not intended to calculate supplementary child allowance:

> I'm asking myself if the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* is the right measure. To remind you: the function of the table is to secure the livelihood of a child through payments by the separated parent. The table is originally NOT intended to calculate supplementary child allowances by the employer.

He also adds that in order to find a fair solution, the RCC would have to deal with every case individually which it cannot do due to data protection rights and administrative overhead. Theodore would like to make the supplementary child allowance lower than the amounts calculated by the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* and instead increase the hourly wage for everyone. Furthermore, while he is for paying supplementary child allowance, it is normal that expenses for children are paid for by the wages of the parents, as well as the public child benefits. Theodore provides a new, radical critique of the evaluation device: The *Düsseldorfer Tabelle's* intention is not to calculate supplementary child allowance in the first place. This critique is radical in the sense of Boltanski and Thévenot, since it argues, that the formula at hand is employing an inappropriate evaluative frame, one that belongs to a different 'world'. Furthermore, by stating that it is 'normal' that parents pay for their children with their wages, he 'relativizes' (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006: 336f) the character of supplementary child allowance: It is not a right of parents and not an obligation for a good employer, it is just a nice gift, a private arrangement between the RCC and its members that does not refer to a general good. Frank and Theodore then both discuss if children are more expensive when the parents are separated, due to higher rent and child care

costs. Frank also notes that they will probably not find a ready-made solution out there and asks what exactly the supplementary child allowance should achieve: a gradual improvement of the financial situation of people with children, or a coverage of the costs of children, minus public child benefits? Theodore responds by once more stating that what the *Düsseldorfer Tabelle* wants to achieve is not what the RCC wants to do with supplementary child allowance. Then he proposes to think again what exactly they want to achieve with supplementary child allowance and if maybe they could just agree on an additional €2 or €2.50 per child and hour. With this, Theodore is the first person that proposes to discuss what exactly the purpose of paying child allowance should be. However, instead of providing possible answers for his question Theodore immediately proposes a relatively simple solution, which is not further legitimized. Frank agrees with the proposal :

> So I've thought about this again and I've realized that my more complex considerations on the calculation might drive me to insanity so I've just calculated my income if I would work for 40 hours, and would get additional €2 or €2.50 and this would be fine for me. Therefore, I have no objection against the proposal.

Frank's argument that "complex considerations might lead to insanity" suggests the relevance of using a kind of 'satisficing' logic (Simon, 1956) for legitimization: although there is a desire to achieve true justice here, it seems that, as people realize how complex the question is, at some point finding a totally fair and adequate evaluation device does not seem important anymore. Instead, a simple solution, with no complex calculations attached, is deemed to be legitimate. Anton joins the discussion to add that people should just say how much additional pay they need. He adds that this makes more sense since people could have higher financial needs due to various reasons – not only children. He proposes a compromise between generalization and particularity:

> We will never be able to discuss and consider all potential situations! But we can develop a system which will allow us in the future, if needed, to incorporate different situations. I am thinking of a system in

which higher financial needs of people could be described as prototypical cases in order to allow orientation. These prototypical cases could be extended whenever needed.

We have seen this before, Anton both criticizes attempts to find general solutions for particular cases *and* the beings chosen for this evaluation test. To him, it is not only the situations of parents that should be considered. Frank responds to this and says that a solution like this would end in overly complex calculations and he thinks the +€2 proposal makes sense. Several people agree with Frank. In the end, there are no critical concerns and they decide on €2 per child and hour, provided that people ask for it.

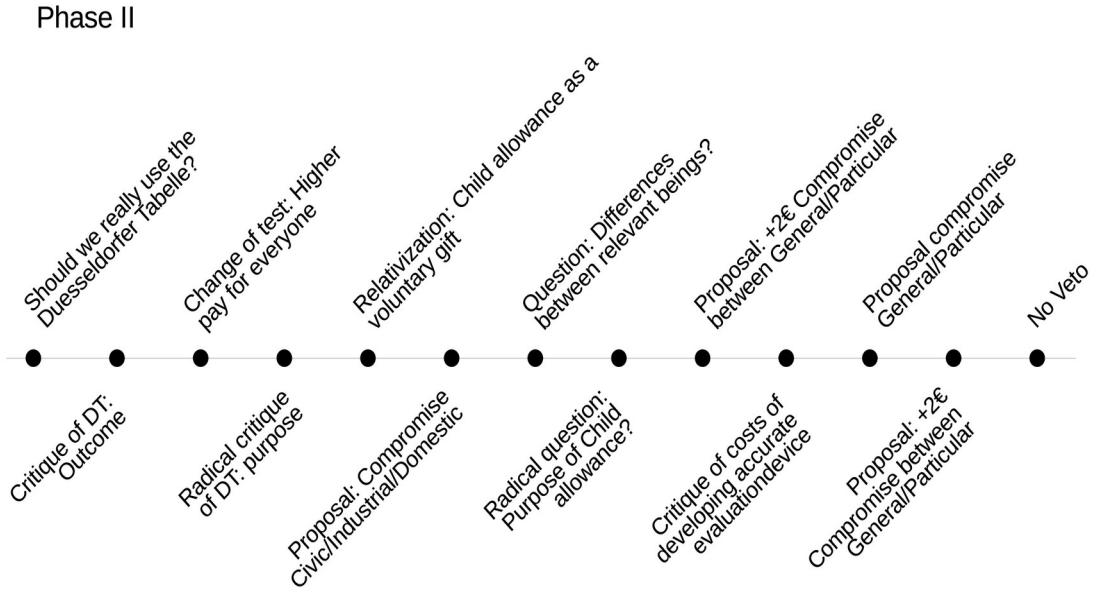

Figure 3: Negotiation of Supplementary Child Allowance, Phase II

In the second phase of the discussion there are three insights for a sociology of critique and evaluation. First, a calculation device is criticized due to its outcome,

not the principles that are used for calculation. Second, the complexity of trying to find a general solution that can do justice to plenty of different and particular cases can lead to a point where the objective of finding a just model does not seem enough to justify complexity. On the contrary, it can ‘lead to insanity’! Third, the compromise that the collective eventually agrees on can be understood as the outcome of a discussion in which the tension between generalization and particularity has been discussed exhaustively to the point where people agreed on a ‘satisficing’ solution.

Discussion

The process by which the RCC tries to collectively find a model for paying fair supplementary child allowance has been analyzed by utilizing Boltanski and Thévenot’s notion of the test as a heuristic framework. By following the justification work of members of the collective, the analysis showed that actors in a situation of radical uncertainty do not necessarily follow a linear path from giving worth to its assessment. Rather, actors conduct a collective negotiation process by which values and their appropriate translation into measures are simultaneously discovered and created. In a testing situation like this, together with the prevalent ideas of justice, the aims, subjects and objects of a test may change. The test is more a discovery process than an implementation of established ideas or values; it is more exploration than exploitation. In this process, people discover what they actually mean when they value something and the possibilities of assessing worth influence the ways of valuing. When the RCC starts discussing supplementary child allowance, there is initially no certainty about which beings are put to a test. It appears that it is not only parents that are (financially) responsible for the up-bringing of children. Problematizing the concept of parents in turn brings up the consideration of other relations of care, posing the question of whether indeed every kind of responsibility for people in need of care should be considered for supplementary allowances. Even when these questions are answered, the RCC has to develop an evaluation device that can simultaneously assess the costs of raising children and what it means to be a good employer with regard to these costs. The paper further illustrates that in order to mobilize the test for empirical studies and to make use of the potential of the conceptual apparatus of Boltanski and Thévenot’s pragmatic sociology of critique, tests should not be seen as linear

endpoints, but rather as ‘temporary truces’ with varying degrees of stability (Reinecke et al., 2017). While, in a first phase, the RCC agrees on an evaluation device for calculating supplementary child allowance, this is criticized and subsequently replaced in the second phase.

Supplementary child allowance is conceptualized as an evaluation device. The concept of the evaluation device captures the double moral complexity of both developing a formula for assessing worth and using this formula to standardize evaluation over time and space. In both Reinecke’s (2010) study on Fairtrade minimum prices for coffee, as well as Annisette et al.’s (2017) study on evaluating large-scale capital investment projects of a water utility in Western Australia, an evaluation device is contested on the grounds that it does not allow to consider particular situations and characteristics that cannot easily be generalized. While Reinecke and Annisette et al. discuss their findings as compromises between different worlds, this paper contributes a different possibility for interpretation: compromises between generalization and particularity. The tension between generalization and particularity in evaluation and, especially, evaluation devices is illustrated and further elaborated by the analysis of the (failed) development of an evaluation device in the RCC. In the end, the RCC settles for a compromise between the need to find a generalizable agreement and the hesitation to use a standardized format to evaluate the situation of particular parents and their children. The final solution is a compromise, since +€2 model answers to the need of making a generalized difference between people with children and people without children. It is also a formula that offers a clear answer to the question of how much supplementary child allowance a person with one, two or three children should get. In that sense, the formula can be seen as a form investment that stabilizes relations. However, it is a very specific device in that the +€2 model lacks any concrete foundation of legitimization. No one actually knows how these +€2 are supposed to be related to the situation of parents with children; it is not clear what this €2 should achieve and why it has to be exactly this amount. It is an arrangement that allows to calculate the future, but in itself does not calculate, i.e. it does not specify a principle of equivalence that could explain itself. The +€2 model is a valuation and valorizing device that signifies and remunerates value, but abstains from evaluation.

There are, then, at least two coordinating forms that accomplish a compromise between the general and the particular. On one hand, the combination of evaluation devices with methods that can consider particularities and, on the other hand, valorizing devices that signify and remunerate value, but are void of concrete evaluation based on principles of equivalence.[19]

Boltanski and Thévenot's economies of worth framework allows us to view organizations as structures that compromise multiple orders of worth. In this paper, the framework has been successfully applied to deal with normative tensions in organizations. However, the tensions that the framework is able to capture are limited to those that can be related to competing higher common goods. In the economies of worth framework, legitimacy is always related to a 'rise to generality'. Considering particularity, in contrast, problematizes all attempts to establish equivalency between different particularities, which is the basis for any generalization. By analyzing the justification work accompanying the failed attempt to develop an evaluation device, this paper points to a different tension that organizations have to deal with, as well as a different compromise. The tension between the general and the particular is especially relevant to consider when studying valuation in organizations, since organizations have to create generalization and standardization in order to guarantee certainty and stability for coordination (Thévenot, 2001). This need for generalization can come into tension with considerations of particularity, as has been demonstrated in the case of the RCC negotiating supplementary child allowance.

19 Practices that merely signify and remunerate value, without actually evaluating value, are probably most often non-monetary, like honorary titles or ceremonial rituals But one could think of certain bonuses or concessions as valorizing devices, if they combine symbolic valuation with monetary remuneration, while abstaining from evaluation.

Conclusion

Evaluation can be a highly uncertain process where not only is the final outcome unclear, but also what exactly might constitute worth. Evaluation can be made less uncertain and less costly if established evaluation devices are used. This paper analyzed the attempt to develop an evaluation device that was used to calculate fair supplementary child allowance in a collective based on radical democracy. To understand the process by which the collective tries to come to a shared understanding of a fair model to pay supplementary child allowance, the paper utilized Boltanski and Thévenot's notion of the test. By applying the test as heuristic framework, the analysis offers two insights relevant for the literature on test. First, the analysis shows that actors in situations of radical uncertainty do not necessarily follow a linear path from giving worth to its assessment. It is rather a discovery process in which people learn what their values imply and how they can be realized in practice. Second, in following the justification work to develop a fair model to pay supplementary child allowance, the analysis furthermore shows that even in a situation that is characterized by an imperative to justification, people might settle for solutions that are good enough, or 'satisficing'. By bringing in a consideration of the tension between the general and the particular in evaluation practices, the paper thus contributes to studies of evaluation in contexts of moral complexity.

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Appendix IV: Composite Relations: Organizations between collective and company

Abstract

This paper analyses how collective firms deal with the challenge of being a company and a collective at the same time. Based on a comparative study of two collective firms, the paper shows how their member-relations are configured in such a way that they allow to balance and mediate different modes of coordination. The paper distinguishes two different kinds of logics that these firms use to coordinate work: First, coordination based on generalization, that is, the use of standards, roles and rules. Second, coordination based on familiarity, which rests on intimacy and detailed, often tacit knowledge and understanding. Drawing on ideas from Viviana Zelizer‘s relational work approach and Laurent Thévenot‘s sociology of engagements, it is argued that the mediation between general and particular can be governed through defining the mutual rights and responsibilities between an organization and its members. Collective firms need to create relations that are able to acknowledge and value particularities, but they also have to consider collective goals. They achieve this balance through ‘composite relations’, which mediate between familiarity and generalization.

Keywords: collective firms, cooperatives, coordination, relational work, sociology of engagements

Introduction

This paper analyses the relationship between coordination, evaluation and morality in two small, democratically governed collective firms. The cases were selected based on the firms using collective, democratic governance structures, not on the legal form of the cooperative. This understanding of collective firm mirrors Rothschild and Whitt's definition of a collective or a cooperative as "any enterprise in which control rests ultimately and overwhelmingly with the member-employees-owners, regardless of the particular legal framework through which this is achieved" (1989: 2).

A central question in the literature on cooperatives is if and how they can escape ‚degeneration' towards a conventional managerial hierarchy (Cornforth, 1995). There is ample theoretical and empirical work on cooperatives that lays out conditions, possibilities and facilitating factors that make democracy in economic organizations possible (Cheney et al., 2014; Johnson, 2006; Kokkinidis, 2015; Rothschild-Whitt, 1976; Sauser, 2009; Spear, 2004;). Jaumier (2017: 219) summarizes the factors the literature describes that facilitate ongoing democracy and equality as (1) relating to environment and size – for instance small-size and niche-markets, and (2) rules and procedures that support democratic practices – among the most common democratic decision-making.

Since most of this research tends to focus on governance issues, a perspective on everyday experiences and relational dynamics is often missing in studies of democratic firms (Jaumier, 2017; Resch and Steyaert, 2020). If we consider that cooperatives are "run and shaped by what its members do in the course of their daily interactions with their organization as much as by what they say at formal assemblies" (Stryjan, 1994: 66), it is striking that only a limited number of empirical studies concentrates on relational practices in cooperatives, beyond governance and decision making procedures. Studies that analyze relational practices highlight their importance for understanding the complex balances alternative firms have to achieve. For instance Jaumier (2017) discusses how informal relationship-management practices of workers via their formal superiors "prevents chiefs from being chiefs". Langmead (2016) describes how ongoing 'individual-collective alignment' facilitates organizational change within organizational democracy.

Resch and Steyaert (2020) describe relational activities that foster intimacy and affective connection between members of a radical democratic network of freelancers and start ups.

The paper argues, that to understand what it means to be a company and collective at the same time, it is necessary to go beyond questions of democratic governance and include the challenge to combine different logics of coordination. The paper focuses on how coordination is supported by relational dynamics, drawing on two conceptual approaches that deal with the entanglement of coordination and morality in the economy: Viviana Zelizer's notion of ‘differentiated ties’ and Laurent Thévenot’s ‘regimes of engagement’.

Zelizer’s work highlights how interpersonal relations, and the meaning that people give to them, shape the accomplishment of economic activities. This paper particularly draws on „The Purchase of Intimacy“ (2005) in which Zelizer analyses how people manage to sustain intimate relationships that entail economic activities, despite the common believe that intimacy and economics will corrupt each other. Up to now, Zelizer‘ s framework has been primarily used to study the interweaving of intimacy and economics in families and markets for intimate or taboo goods.[20] This paper is interested in the interplay between intimacy and economics in collective firms, starting from the question of how they can sustain a mediation between being a community of like-minded people and an economic organization.

In Zelizer’s work, morality enters into the analysis of economic processes via their entanglement with intimate relations. However, morality in the economy is broader than the question of intimacy. For French pragmatic sociology (Eymard-Duvernay et al., 2005; Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006) all economic processes have a moral component, insofar as they rely on conventions that are related to specific ideas of what is good. To broaden the analysis of morality in the economy, this paper combines and complements central ideas of Zelizer’s work with central ideas of

20 For a review article on „Research on the interplay between intimacy and economy“ see Bandelj et al. 2015.

French pragmatic sociology, in particular, Thévenot’s sociology of engagements (2001, 2011, 2019), which distinguishes different levels of generalization in coordination. This framework has been used in a variety of social sciences research (Blok and Meilvang, 2015; Centemeri, 2015; Goulet, 2013; Howard-Grenville and Carlile, 2006; Meriluoto, 2018; Meilvang et al., 2018, Ponte and Cheyns, 2013; Truninger, 2011). In organization studies, the regimes of engagement have been used to theorize everyday practices in organizations (Bullinger, 2014) and organizational bricolage (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010).

Based on Thévenot’s notion of coordination, this paper distinguishes two different logics that firms use to coordinate work: First, coordination based on generalization, that is, the use of standards, roles and rules. Second, coordination based on familiarity, which rests on intimacy and detailed, often tacit, knowledge and understanding. The paper argues that it is important to consider both modes as they both provide sources of stability and certainty that sustain coordination. The co-existence of these two modes of coordination, however, leads to normative tensions. Collective firms can compose relationships that combine elements related to different modes of coordination and related moral orientations, thus mediating their tension. These 'differentiated ties' (Zelizer, 2000) are distinguished from each other through symbols and rituals, as well as evaluative practices. The main conceptual contribution of this paper is the notion of the ‘composite relation’, a heuristic concept that enables to analyze how organizations balance both modes of coordination through differentiating and designing the relationship to their members. This concept has been developed out of the analytical needs of a qualitative comparative case study of three collective firms which, aimed at understanding the relationship between coordination and morality. A central finding of this study was that many of the coordinative and normative tensions, as well as solutions, were linked to the specific way that belonging or relating to the organization was understood.
Due to space constraints, only two of the three collective firms will be discussed in this paper. Their analysis shows how collectives use composite relations to deal with tensions between familiar and general coordination, between being a collective and a company.

Differentiated ties and the interplay between intimacy and economy

Viviana Zelizer's work highlights how interpersonal relations, and the meaning that people give to them, shape the accomplishment and nature of economic activities. Zelizer argues, that Economic Sociology should analyze 'relational work' in order to understand how people establish, maintain, negotiate, transform and terminate interpersonal relations by creating viable matches between meaningful relations, transactions and media, such as money, food stamps or favors (2012, 2013). Due to her focus on the intermingling of different logics in social relations, Zelizer's work offers important insights for a sociology of (economic) organizations. In "The purchase of intimacy" (2005) she explores the intersection between intimate relationships and monetary transfers. She discusses that most scholars regard the relationship between intimacy and economics as either one of 'hostile worlds', where contact between these two will lead to moral contamination and degradation, or else a 'nothing but' relationship, which assumes that intimate relations involving money are either nothing but economic exchange, or nothing but coercion. In contrast to this, Zelizer posits her own account as one of 'differentiated ties': In their social relations, people are able to mediate between the intimate and the economic, they routinely differentiate social relations. This is what Zelizer describes as 'relational work': "For each distinct category of social relations, people erect a boundary, mark the boundary by means of names and practices, establish a set of distinctive understandings that operate within that boundary, designate certain sorts of economic transactions as appropriate for the relation, bar other transactions as inappropriate, and adopt certain media for reckoning and facilitating economic transactions within the relation." (Zelizer, 2012: 145).

Zelizer analyses how people use different payment systems to distinguish social relations from each other, among them intimate relations (Zelizer, 2000: 818f; 2005: 20ff). This form of relational work has been further developed into the concept of 'monetary earmarking' (Zelizer, 2012), by which people signal the proper use and destination of money. By earmarking money people construct and distinguish social relations, each differentiated currency is suitable for only some social relations and transactions. Earmarking is used in firms as well, where modes of payment – for instance hourly wages or annual salaries – create and signify different relationships between employer and employee. Zelizer uses the

idea of 'differentiated ties' to highlight, that people are able to use complex evaluative practices to differentiate relationships. In her work, the intimate sphere presents the particular, the idiosyncratic, which can not be formulated for a general audience. Zelizer suggests that her relational work approach would be suitable to study organizations (2005: 308), and has herself engaged with the significance of certain intimate relations for organizations (2009). This paper applies the idea of differentiated ties to explain coordination in collective firms. Since in organizations relations between members have to balance several logics and conflicting goods that go beyond the tension between intimacy and economic gains, the paper next introduces Laurent Thévenot's notion of organizations as 'compromising devices' between different rationalities.

Organizations as Compromise Devices between different modes of coordination

For Thévenot organizations are able to deal with of two different obstacles to coordination: Contingency and uncertainty, as well as the presence of multiple and conflicting legitimate principles of evaluation. They can deal with these obstacles to coordination because, first, they establish certainty over time and space by the generalization of relations. Second, they establish relatively stable compromises between multiple, conflicting values by designing 'composite arrangements'. The notion of the composite arrangement is based on Thévenot's work with Boltanski (2006). "On Justification" develops a model of the structure of the six most legitimate coordination logics, 'orders of worth', which are based on different ideas of a common good. These orders of worth are extended towards 'common worlds', which house specific objects and subjects that have meaning and worth. All of these worlds can be the basis of coordination based on generalization. If for instance, the market world is of high importance in an organization, coordination will tend to rationalize in regards to market expansion and good salesmen will have a high status. If the industrial world is of high importance, coordination will tend to optimize product quality and consequently, technical expertise will have a high status. With the idea of different possible common goods and related ideas of what is rational and just, "On Justfication" allows to analyze moral conflicts that emerge when different coordination logics, based on different orders of worth, clash. To deal with the empirical reality of situations in which conflicting orders of

worth co-exist, Boltanski and Thévenot introduce the idea of composite arrangements. These are composed of elements of different worlds, which endow the arrangement with their own substance and identity. According to Thévenot, „The firm should be treated as a compromising device between several modes of coordination, involving at least the market and the industrial modes. This definition emphasizes the plurality of the worlds entangled in the making of the firm. By contrast, settings that mainly involve one order of worth do not need the kind of composite arrangements which give substance to the firm.“ (2001: 411).
In Laurent Thévenot‘s conception of organizations, generalization or the stabilization of relations is discussed as a solution to coordination problems. But it is not only the compromising of different higher order values that makes up the ‘organized complexity’ of organizations, it is also the compromise between formalizing relationships and allowing for informal relationships and considerations of particular goods. In his work after “On Justification”, Thévenot conceptualized a type of coordination in which certainty is not rooted in conventional categories, but familiar knowledge.

Coordination based generalization and coordination based on familiarity

Thévenot's sociology of engagements has been developed to expand the analysis of coordination beyond, respectively, below, situations in which there is a need for public justification. The distinction between different ‘regimes of engagement’ allows to understand “agency of the most personal or intimate kind and agency that is collective, public or institutional” (Thévenot, 2001: 57). The main idea is that people can be engaged in their material and social environment in different ways. Every form of engagement is therefore connected to a specific type of sense-making, which is always tied to evaluation. “Engagement with the world is first a reality test that depends on the way the agent captures the world within a certain type of format (publicly conventionalized, functional, familiar, etc.). But this formatting of reality depends on a form of evaluation that singles out what is relevant.”(Thévenot, 2002: 54) .
Thévenot differentiates four main ways people can be engaged with their socio-material environment: The regime of public justification, in which people coordinate their actions according to a common good; the regime of planned action, in which people coordinate their actions in order to achieve a plan; the regime of

engagement in familiarity, in which people protect personal and local convenience; and the regime of engaging in exploration in which excitement and novelty is pursued (Thévenot, 2014)[21]. Both the regime of engagement in public justification and the regime of planned engagement support standardized action, where coordination is based on on generalizing categories and conventions. In contrast to these regimes, the regime of engagement in familiarity succeeds without relying on conventions. Here, coordination and evaluation are carried out at the level of local adjustment. Familiar engagement is concerned with allowing the (re-)creation of the relationship between a person and her familiar environment.

Thévenot's regimes of engagement allow to view the challenge between particular and collective goods not as one between the interests of utility-maximizing agents and a collective, but as the need to compose a balance between familiar attachments and more generalized modes of coordination. This article contrasts two basic modes of coordination in organizations: Coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity. Coordination based on generalization subsumes the characteristics of engagement in a plan and engagement in public justification. This is done in order to capture the dialectical tension the paper is interested in: The tension between what can be generalized, and what can not.

Coordination based on generalization uses formal hierarchy, institutions and rules to create relatively stable relations between people and their socio-material environment. People, objects and situations are not treated in their particularity, but based on common properties that can be abstracted from them, according to general rules. Coordination based on generalization is based on the type of rationality that is depicted in theories of scientific management and Weber‘s theory of bureaucracy. It rests on substantial investments in standards and rules and, carried to its logical conclusion, it makes sure that everyone and everything is shaped and distilled into their most functional form. While the initial investment to achieve this is quite costly, once rules and forms are established, the predictability and certainty they generate yield decreasing marginal costs of coordination.

21 Due to limited space, this paper can not provide a detailed discussion of the sociology of engagements, and particularly engaging in exploration will not be further elaborated on in this paper.

Coordination based on familiarity rests on intimacy and detailed, often tacit, knowledge about one‘s environment. The rationality here is quite different from generalization. With coordination based on generalization, certainty rests on knowing how to act according to general rules, in a situation which is shaped and prepared functionally. With coordination based on familiarity, certainty rests on an intimate knowledge of the elements of a specific situation, stemming from direct, repeated experience: “This engagement supports the ease guaranteed by surroundings that are grasped by idiosyncratic indices and conveniently accommodated through a former habituation.” (Thévenot, 2019:7). People are able to treat each other and their environment more 'thoroughly' or 'adequately', when they know each other. Coordination based on familiarity is based on particular knowledge, which is gained by investing one‘s personal time. It allows to coordinate with more flexibility, taking into considerations particularities.
Thévenot links the different kinds of coordinative powers of regimes to related kinds of goods. Coordination based on generalization is related to conceptions of a common or general good, while coordination based on familiarity is related to moral considerations of particular needs. In coordination based on generalizing relations, the underlying idea of justice is one in which it is just to treat all people/objects/situation the same, if they share certain characteristics. Which characteristics have to be taken into account is determined by a central principle of equivalence. For instance, if an employee arrives late and obviously sleep-deprived to an important meeting, delivers a confusing presentation and does not seem to engage properly in the resulting discussion, from a standpoint of justice, it seems fair and right to subsequently deny him promotion. This idea of justice is also the base of Boltanski and Thévenot's framework in “On Justification”. To come to justifiable agreements and orderings, people have to “divest themselves of their singularity and converge towards a form of generality transcending persons and the situations in which they interrelate” (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999: 363).
To provide an alternative ending to the story of the under-performing employee: If his manager knows that he usually performs very well, but is currently caring for his sick elderly father, she might find it legitimate to treat this employee differently than she would normally do. This idea of morality has been most elaborately articulated in the ethics of care approach (Held, 2006). The ethics of care emphasizes that we can think and act as if we were independent is only possible

because we are embedded in a network of social relations that sustain and protect us. It rejects the idea, that reasoning about moral problems is the better the more abstract. The ethics of care “respects rather than removes itself from the claims of particular others with whom we share actual relationships” (Held, 2006: 11). The central focus is thus on the moral salience of attending to and meeting the needs of particular others for whom we take responsibility.

Both approaches can foster and protect important goods in organizations, and both are related to different modes of coordination: Coordination based on generalization aligns with an ethics of justice, while coordination based on familiarity aligns with an ethics of care.

Composite Relations and the Moral Sense of 'Not going too far'

While Thévenot’s notion of organizations as compromise devices is interested in the intermingling of different logics of coordination in organizations, Zelizer is interested in the intermingling between different logics in social relationships. Both approaches are inherently interested in how conflicting logics and moral ideas can be resolved in social interaction and coordination. With the notion of ‘composite relation’, this paper includes crucial points of both Zelizer’s and Thévenot’s work into a concept that helps to explain the mediation between coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity in collective firms.

Moral ideas can come into conflict on two different levels. First, different ideas of common goods can clash. Second, a common good and a particular good can come into conflict. Thévenot’s notion of composite organizations is concerned with the former, since it offers a framework to analyze how organizations can create certainty and order in the presence of multiple, conflicting common goods.

Zelizer’s work focuses on situations in which particular and common goods are intermingled and come into conflict. Her concept of differentiated ties highlights, that people regularly combine the intimate and the economic in their relationships, and that they carefully deploy different ways of signifying the specific meanings of these ‘differentiated’ relationships. While Zelizer does not differentiate different levels of coordination, in her usage of the difference between the economic and the intimate, she usually points towards mediation between the general and the particular. By using the word composite rather than differentiated in this paper, the emphasis is not on the fact, that people distinguish differentiated relations, but

rather on the fact, that organizations compose relations that mediate between different modes of coordination. The composite relations this paper is interested in achieve a compromise between generality and particularity. They connect an ethics of justice with an ethics of care.
Composite relationships allow a further qualification of the moral sense of people engaged in such relationships: The protection of relations that are “neither/nor” can only be achieved by never completely oppressing one of the embedded goods. This suggests a specific depiction of the everyday moral sense of people: The desire to 'not go too far': in their relationship to other people and their environment, people might feel the wish to pursue both general, as well as particular goods. They are often acting according to both an ethics of justice and an ethics of care, moving on a continuum between both orientations. A sense of injustice is then experienced, if a situation is evaluated according to only one of these moral orientations. In collective organizations, this means, that people try to pursue both the well-being of their members and that of the organization itself. It would be going too far, for instance, if people are put into existential risks to secure the ongoing of their cooperative. 'Going too far' can also be understood in a related sense where it concerns the appropriate definition of a relationship. For instance, if people refuse to be considered or treated as “just” colleagues, or “just” friends, a judgment which seems to distant from what the relationship “actually” is.

Composite Relations in two collective firms

In the following, the paper will describe how two collective firms deal with the challenge of being a company and a collective, by composing relationships that allow to mediate between generalized and familiar coordination.

„Call a Bike“ (CAB) is a bike courier collective based in Germany. At the time of the research it had been existing for 9 years, with 26 people working for the firm. Everyone working for CAB gets paid equal wages per hour. The analysis of CAB draws on the observation of regular working days in the office (6), general assemblies (4), and one annual plenary lasting a day. Observations took place over a time-frame of 20 months. The analysis additionally draws on 7 semi-structured interviews, as well as minutes of plenary meetings over three years and the internal wiki.

The “Good Tech Collective” (GTC) is a worker cooperative that builds digital applications and websites, based in the UK. At the time of the research, GTC had been existing for 6 years. Over this six years, GTC transitioned from a two person LLP to a co-op with eight members, six regular and several occasional freelancers. GTC started with an equal pay per hour policy, but when a growing number of differently skilled and experienced people started working for GTC, they changed to a differentiated pay scale, which is limited by a ratio of 3:1 and a fixed maximum and minimum salary. The author conducted an ethnographic study of the GTC over a period of three months, which included observation of internal meetings, meetings with clients and social activities. The analysis additionally draws on 13 semi-structured interviews, as well as documents such as minutes of meetings and the internal wiki.

Collective Governance and the significance of consent

Both CAB and GTC have been founded with the explicit goal to provide a working environment based on equality and solidarity. Intimate relationships between members had been important from the start. But the complexity of their organization requires both collectives to use coordination forms that allow to generalize and standardize. Both collectives use a participative, democratic governance structure which is based on semi-autonomous working groups and a group assembly which has ultimate authority. CAB have five different working groups which meet regularly and are responsible for certain issues like finances or sales. Additionally, they hold a plenary assembly once a month. In the plenary assembly, working groups, but also individuals can bring in proposals for decisions. Decisions are taken according to consent. GTC use a Sociocratic governance model, which means that their work is organized and governed by six semi-autonomous working groups, so called ‘circles’, which meet regularly and are responsible for certain key issues, like design or business development. These working groups practice consent-based decision making. Ultimate authority is with the member’s circle, which consists of all formal members of the cooperative.

Like in many other collectives, in the working groups and plenaries of both CAB and GTC decisions are based on consent. Consent, in contrast to consensus means that there is no significant objection or veto to a decision. This difference is

important, since a consent does not mean, that everyone in the assembly is happy with a decision, it just means that everyone can live with the decision. Taking decisions by consent means, that a singular, particular concern can stop a proposal that everyone else agrees on. There is no general rule that would prescribe, under which conditions a veto is legitimate, there is no attempt at comparing and ranking concerns of different people, a veto is a veto and can only be legitimized by a particular person with particular concerns. While vetos are rare in the practice of both collectives, structuring the main governance structure in a way that renders particular concerns as theoretically more important than collective interests is a foundational rationality that influences organizational practices and decision-making.

The relationship between these collectives and their members cannot be described as either employer/employee or community/community-members, it involves economic as well as social considerations. Remarkably, the relationship also considers and protects particularity. Particularity is, however, bound to designated areas: People may take their own decisions if it doesn't affect other's or is to the benefit of all. People may veto a decision in the formal, controlled setting of an assembly. If there is a shared understanding that specific particularities are endangered by decisions or practices, both collectives try to prevent 'going too far'. For collectives it is important, that the relationship between members is one, that can accept both, particular needs and the common good. Depending on situational considerations, they have to be able to either balance between both, or chose one of them. It would be a problem, if it was only ever one of these 'winning'.

Not a member, but not "just" a freelancer either: Status differentiation

When it comes to the relationship between a cooperative and people who work for it, conventionally, there is an either/or choice: People can be co-owners and members of the cooperative, which means there is a relationship that is long term, in which interpersonal trust can be established. Or people can be freelancers, a market relation, which does not need any kind of trust or intimate knowledge, a relationship between independent, utility-maximizing individuals. While people working for CAB and GTC can formally be distinguished between members and "non-members", both collectives have established more complex, differentiated

relations for “non-members” which are marked through specific language and evaluative practices.

CAB is legally a company with limited liability owned by a registered association. Internally, however, CAB is organized like a cooperative. People can become members of the collective – „kollektivista“ – after three months of regularly working for CAB. Kollektivista are engaged in at least one of the working groups and have veto-rights at the assembly. However, not every courier working for CAB is interested in taking part in the governance structures.[22] Therefore, there can be stark differences in terms of commitment for the collective. But apart from the veto-right at the assembly the non-kollektivistas enjoy the same rights as kollektivista: They get equal pay and are paid to take part in the assembly. This is interesting, since CAB needs a lot of personal investment by its members to make the company sustainable. But the people who are involved in the collective still share the advantages that they have worked for with people that are not taking on the same amount of responsibilities. There was, however, a critical moment in the history of CAB, when this composition of different ways of relating to the collective was seriously challenged.

Four years after CAB started, four members of the collective surprised the others at an annual extended plenary with the demand to radically restructure the collective.[23] While the majority of the other members were either still studying or had additional sources of income and worked only part-time, the four people who attempted this coup worked full- or almost fulltime for CAB, which was their main source of income. They were also doing the major bulk of the strategic and administrative work. While there was effectively an elite of four people in the collective, who were responsible for critical tasks and usually worked more then they were paid, these very same people had neither entitlements to higher salaries nor exclusive decision-power. Their proposal at the plenary assembly was to drastically reduce the number of people working for CAB. Only the best and

22 The fact that not everyone wants to take over the added responsibility of membership in a collective and that some people prefer to work part-time or project-based has been reported in other studies on collective firms as well (see for instance Cornforth 1995).

23 The analysis of this event is based on the minutes of the meetings, as well as interviews with members of CAB.

fastest couriers should be allowed in the collective, and only if they were working full-time. Their proposition was not to formalize and henceforth remunerate the existing hierarchy. Instead, they were striving for a solution that would equalize members, by demanding that everyone should work approximately the same amount of hours and by reducing the collective of its less worthy members. They were striving for a collective of equally capable and motivated people. Even within “the elite”, there was an unease with allowing evaluative differences between members of CAB. As a reaction to this proposal, everyone in the meeting was asked to describe their personal ideas and wishes for the future of CAB. One member stated that she was very proud to be a part of the collective and hoped, that in the future, it would still be possible to contribute to the collective in smaller ways. Another member supported this, by saying that it would be important for him that they would continue to value the contribution of everyone, regardless of how much time people can spend. A third member stated, that to him the social collective was so important, that he was willing to keep accepting relatively low pay for his work. In these statements we can see the importance of belonging to a collective where everyone is valued in their particularity. In contrast to this, for the people who proposed the restructuring, the best version of a collective was one where people belong to the same general category. Two of these people explicitly stated, that they wanted to work in a collective, where other people are working as much as they were, and shared the same sense of commitment and quality standards. Another one of the elite four stated that she liked her job even when she was doing the demanding work of coordinating deliveries among the couriers “as long as the couriers on the street are doing a good job”.

After a second emergency assembly, the proposal for restructuring was rejected. After this incident the idea was established, that CAB is only a real collective, if it can value the contributions of different people with different skills and time-resources. In an interview, a member told me that:

> I believe, one decision that has been taken after this was that CAB decided, that we can’t use rigid patterns for how we see ourselves. We accepted, that CAB will always be a matter of interpretation and we will always have to be flexible with rules or ignore them, while at the same time stay consequent if it is important. First and foremost, we all have to realize, that we will always have to find compromises. And we will always find

> compromises, and strict and rigid criteria for being part of the collective, like the ones they wanted to introduce, just don’t make sense for our collective.

Remaining CAB members appreciate that subjective, particular circumstances can be legitimate reasons why people are either not able to participate in the governance structures or are not as skilled as other couriers. Still, veto-rights are granted only to the sub-group of members who take part in the collective governance. Giving people, who are “just” couriers and not involved in the governance structures the same authority as kollektivista would be going too far. But from their perspective, refusing non-kollektivista equal pay would just as well be going too far.

GTC is legally a cooperative, they differentiate between members and non-members, and have an additional transitional state. In the year when the author conducted research on the GTC, approx. 17 people were regularly working for the GTC. These people are distinguished into three different categories: Members (9), Collaborators (4) and Freelancers (4). Members are the formal members of the cooperative, they collectively own it and are legally responsible for it. Collaborators are people who are not members yet, but they feel committed to GTC and work almost entirely for GTC. The members are employed by GTC, everyone else is self-employed. If people who work at GTC are asked to draw a conceptual map of their cooperative, they quite often draw three concentric circles, with members located in the most inner circle and freelancers in the most outer circle.

Being a collaborator is a transition phase between being a freelancer and being a member. There is a formal process of becoming a collaborator: Before people can apply to become collaborators they have to define objectives and measurable key results that they want to achieve for GTC, as well as a personal development plan. Collaborators are involved in the self-governance structures, they are automatically part of the 'collaborators circle' and should additionally be part of at least one other circle. Usually, people are part of the circle that is closest to their function at GTC, so developers are in the tech-circle and people responsible for sales and marketing in the sales and marketing circle. Independent of their specific function at GTC, all collaborators have to take up some PR and communication work. Collaborators are also expected to take part in the “social life” of GTC, and attend group lunches, visits to the pub or weekend trips. In return, GTC offers

collaborators paid time to attend the circle meetings, and, after members, collaborators are given priority to work opportunities. There is also a clear dismissal procedure from the side of GTC, collaborators are given two formal warnings and an in-depth review before dismissal.

GTC's coordination logics, which involve self-governance and coordination based on intimate relationships make it impossible to treat everyone who is not (yet) a member as "just" a freelancer. At the same time, GTC has had bad experiences of giving people shared responsibility for the whole enterprise without getting to know them first. The status of a collaborator is thus a relationship that combines characteristics of members and freelancers. In some formal aspects, this relationship resembles the status of quasi-self-employment, an illegal, exploitative relationship. However, the collaborator is not "just" quasi-self-employment, since it is a well-delimited status with clear rules for transitioning from freelancing to becoming a member. Furthermore, collaborators have decision making and veto-rights insofar in their respective circles. The collaborator is thus an institutionalized compromise between being a member and a freelancer.
Both CAB and GTC avoid treating non-members as just freelancers, and have created composite relationships that combine characteristics of members and freelancers, with the aim to achieve a balance between both. These compositions emerged out of the necessities of a collective firm that combines coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity.

Colleagues and friends: Balancing particular and general in the division of labour

To understand how collective firms balance coordination based on familiarity and coordination based on generalization, it is not enough to look at their formal governance structures. Rather, one has to understand their relational work in their day-to-day activities. Due to the differences in the type of work they perform, CAB and GTC have to accomplish very different coordination processes on a regular basis. While in both firms the governance structures allow democratic participation of everyone, in their day-to-day activities, there is a division of labour and a

related, though functionally and temporally constrained, hierarchy.[24] However, people in authority always have to make sure to consider their colleagues not just as workers, but as particular people as well.

In conventional bike courier companies, bike couriers are effectively forced in the position of being competitors vis-a-vis their colleagues. In order to change this relation of competition to one of solidarity, CAB had to fundamentally innovate and change the way bike courier work is coordinated. In Germany, couriers are usually independent contractors and pay a commission to the courier company, which acts as a broker between customers and couriers. While courier companies try to have as many people on the street as possible, they don't feel responsible if not all people on the street get enough orders. This means that especially less experienced couriers are available constantly, while not getting enough orders to earn enough money. Mainstream courier companies profit from the appeal of being a bike courier, which is highly precarious, but still attractive to a lot of young people. Since they do not have to pay the costs, courier companies can be quite inefficient in their coordination of couriers and deliveries, they can have more couriers on the street than necessary, as they always have "surplus couriers". This is the type of exploitation that the founding members of CAB wanted to stop. At CAB every courier on the street is paid equally per hour, not per delivery. In order to afford this, CAB has a highly efficient system for coordinating couriers and deliveries. Every shift, there are two people at the office dedicated only to coordination. CAB calls this role "doing dispo", as in disposition. One person is mainly responsible for taking on orders via telephone, e-Mail and their website. The second person, the main "dispo-person" is responsible for calculating routes as well as committals between the couriers on the street. In order to to optimize the matching between orders with different deadlines and available couriers in different distances to the delivery points, "dispo-people" have to have an overview of all current orders and couriers on the street. This job is only done by experienced couriers who know the city and possible routes quite well and who

24 In the literature on worker cooperatives, formalization, specialization and division of labour is often seen as incompatible with sustaining democracy and equality. Consequently, job rotation is seen as an anti-dote to degeneration (Kokkinidis 2015; Rothschild-Whitt 1976; Sobering 2019). In the collective firms I've studied, specialized knowledge and skills of members are both necessary and not viewed as a danger to collective governance per se.

furthermore know how to handle their different colleagues on the street. Dispo-people have to be aware that the couriers on the street have different experience, fitness and psychological states. They stay in constant contact with the couriers during the shift. The communication between the office and the couriers is via radio. Every courier has a number which is used instead of names over radio-communication, to prevent mishearing. To deal with minor disruptions, unexpected incidents and negotiating best routes with couriers, dispo-people employ humor, insider language and their intimate knowledge of the trade. The nuance in language that they use is impossible to translate in English, as they make heavy use of jargon and puns.

> Dispo-person to a courier on the radio: 54! Alright then, please jump over to X-street, colleague 50 will be there and he has a delivery for you which will bring you to Y-street.
> Dispo-person to a courier on the radio: Take care 47! And by the way it is great how you are totally rocking this just right now. Oh and can you tell me, do you have an estimate for when you will be at X-street?
> (Fieldnotes, paraphrase, translated by the author)

Although they are in a position of ultimate authority, dispo-people use a lot of conversational ‘repair work’ when giving “orders” to couriers, always adjusting their communication as well as their demands in order to not ‘go too far’. Observing a skilled dispo-person is akin to watching a masterful performance in composition. Couriers are treated as bike couriers that have to fulfill a certain role, but the dispo-person always makes sure to treat them as particular people as well. And at times, the person can be more important than the courier.

> Courier passing by in the office: I you don’t have anything for me at the moment, I’ll get something to eat now.
> Dispo-Person: (laughs) I have a lot for you, but go on, eat something first. (points at screen) See, we already have 57 tours. Today we are really rocking it!
> (Fieldnotes, paraphrase, translated by the author)

The sophisticated process of disposition CAB uses can be seen as a strategy of equalizing members instead of remunerating differences: Instead of individual couriers being responsible for their own success, via the dispo-work the accomplishment of delivering all orders in time becomes a collective success. On good days, they are all rocking it together. Dispo-work, which is based on compromises between the particular and the general, fosters solidarity in the collective.

The daily work at GTC is structured by client projects. They can therefore use a coordination approach that is more conventional in their sector: agile project management techniques. Project managers, not unlike dispo-people at CAB, have to achieve a balance between treating team members according to their role in the project, as well as particular people. The balance between acting as a functional leader in a project and the overall equality at GTC led to a conflict with a colleague while I was doing fieldwork. When this colleague, Marcus, started working for GTC, he had been very close to the company, but due to private reasons, he had had to move cities and started working mostly remote. GTC had been trying to accommodate this new situation and had even financed additional working equipment that Marcus new remote work necessitated. Marcus, however started to become quite unreliable, ignoring deadlines set by the project manager, and not being available per e-Mail or phone.
The project manager told me about this conflict:

> He's caused some serious like, some real real problems to me and projects because he just disappears. I can't get hold of him. I don't know where he is, I don't know what country he's in. I've had clients calling me saying where is our website. He was supposed to play a website once and he went missing. And he didn't respond so he can really really leave you hanging. And when I said to him like Marcus you can't do that. He was like ‘Listen you're not my boss.’ And I was like I'm not talking to you as your boss I'm talking to you as the project manager who is getting an angry phone call from the client.

The conflict quickly got a personal note, when Marcus accused the project manager of “being after power”. With this, Marcus effectively ‘went too far’, by framing his relationship with the project manager as one of illegitimate domination, instead of a composition between familiarity and a functional division of labor. The conflict was subsequently discussed in the member’s assembly. One member said that “We have to explain him the expectations we have from our colleagues are not top-down, everyone has to be available in certain times.” While Marcus’ need to work remotely had been accepted, his new unreliability was clearly on the verge of ‘going too far’. Still the member’s decided that one of them would go out for a drink with Marcus, to discuss the situation in a more intimate context. Eventually though, the relationship could not be repaired.

The complex relationship between members and the question of accountability is often a topic of discussions at the GTC. Zelizer notes that ‘When relations resemble others that have significantly different consequences for the parties, people put extra effort into distinguishing the relations, marking their boundaries, and negotiating agreements on their definition’ (2005: 34). The importance, as well as difficulty to demarcate particular composite relations and their meaning is illustrated in this quote of an interview I conducted with Alex, one of the members:

> So for example, on the weekend, I saw a few friends and I was telling them about GTC, my friend John, and stuff like this. And they said: Who is John? And I said, he is my colleague, but he is also my friend. And I was like, we don‘t have any bosses. And they were like, but who hired you. And I was like, well, John was the one who brought me in. And they were like, does he earn more than you? And I said, yeah. And then they said: So he is your boss. You know, immediately, when you say stuff like this, people will say that he must be, or she must be, your boss.

We can see here, that Alex’s friends are looking for markers and symbols that enable them to characterize the relationship between John and Alex as an employer-employee relationship, since to them a higher-status, higher-earning colleague is a boss. They apply both the ‘nothing but’ and the ‘hostile worlds’ fallacy. For Alex, it is not immediately possible to describe his relationship to John to people unfamiliar to the GTC, who have never experienced the intermingling of

different coordination logics in the firm.[25] Nevertheless, for Alex it is important, that their relationship to John is understood in the correct, suitable way, and calling John a boss would be wrong. And just as well, calling him just a colleague, or just a friend, would be ‘going too far’, because John is both.

Both CAB and GTC need a division of labour, which results in temporally and functionally constrained hierarchies. As the role of the dispo-person at CAB and the ways GTC handles conflicts with colleagues show, both collectives still have to balance particular and general modes of coordination, even when they use formal hierarchy,

Discussion

This paper started from the question of how collective firms deal with the paradox of being a community and a company at the same time. This question necessitates to include questions of morality in the analysis of economic and organizational processes. To do so, two theoretical approaches were utilized and combined in the notion of the composite relation: Laurent Thévenot’s notion of coordination based on evaluation, as well as Zelizer‘s notion of relational work, through which people interweave intimacy and economics in their relationship. This draws attention to the use of differentiated ways of relating to and coordinating within an organization. By constructing composite relationships which are marked through emic language, rituals and evaluative practices, organizations can endow members with varying degrees of discretion, autonomy and responsibility. The way that relationships between members and the organization are defined determines the extent of coordination based on generalization and the extend of coordination based on familiarity.

The case studies in this paper illustrate that small organizations with democratic governance develop composite relations that are more open to the particular, since they rely on coordination based on engagement in familiarity, which fosters shared understandings and trust. For both CAB and GTC coordination based on

25 While they trusted, that I, as someone who had spent a considerable amount of time with them, would understand.

generalization and coordination based on familiarity are equally important. The mediation between the general and the particular is achieved on three levels that condition the relationship between the collectives and their members:
(1) Their governance structures, while built on generalizable relations, formalized rules and procedures, leave space for particularity. This can be seen by their approach towards decision-making, as well as their sensibility towards sustaining trusting personal relationships between all members.
(2) Both CAB and GTC allow “non-members” to relate to the organization that can not be reduced to “just” a market relationship. “Partial members” are allowed quite substantial participation in the governance, as well as the same rights as “full-members” in regards to pay and other perks.
(3) While both collectives have a division of labour and related formal hierarchies in their day-to-day work, they make sure to balance particular needs of members with the functional needs of the work process.

Collective firms are more exposed to the tension between the general and the particular than conventional firms, but nevertheless, all organizations have to manage this tension. The more firms are dependent on valorizing the subjectivity of their employees, the more they have to deal with the integration of individual and particular orientations and demands in their coordination mechanisms (Lohr, 2003). While this study can not say anything definite about how the relationship between collective goods and particular goods differs in collective firms vis-a-vis conventional firms, one tentative suggestion is that the boundaries that discern what ‘going too far’ means are differently positioned and unequally distributed: Familiar engagement exists in every conventional firm, and in some, it is central for successful coordination. However, in conventional firms, the extent to which particularity is valued is constrained by how much it contributes to profit generation. Valuing particular goods as not just a means, but an end in itself, would be going too far. Furthermore, in conventional firms, there is a formal hierarchy, which allows to treat some particularities as more important than others, sometimes even as “general”. With composite relations, organizations accomplish an engagement with and between their members that is not reduced to a strictly quid-pro-quo relationship. The accomplishment of this compromise is a vital

condition that allows companies to function.[26] Therefore, the concept of the composite relation can offer a productive lens to understand how conventional firms manage to mediate between the general and the particular.

Conclusion

This article originated from the question of how collective firms manage to sustain organizations that are leaderless and value both the individual members, as well as the collective. While there is already ample scholarly work on the (non-) achievement of democracy in worker cooperatives, this paper brings a new perspective to the topic. Based on central notions of French pragmatic sociology, the problem is analyzed not as one of democracy, but as the need to balance different rationalities of coordination.

To explain how collective firms mediate between collective and company, this paper distinguishes two different logics of coordination, based on Thévenot's sociology of engagements: Coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity. In contrast to coordination based on generalization, coordination based on familiarity can rely less on formalized relations because the sources of certainty are in particular relations and dependencies. The format of information is not standardized and ties can transfer more nuanced, detailed and idiosyncratic information. The article highlights the moral dimension of coordination: While coordination based on familiarity aligns with an ethics of care, coordination based on generalization aligns with an ethics of justice.

Based on Zelizer's work on differentiated ties, Thévenot's composite organizations as compromising devices, and his sociology of engagements, this paper develops the heuristic concept of composite relations. The composite relation is a conceptual tool that helps to uncover how organizations mediate between coordination based on generalization and coordination based on familiarity. By creating composite relations collective firms are able to reconcile and balance

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26 Notwithstanding that external factors, especially the distribution of power between those people buying the labour of others and those people selling their labour power, crucially determines the importance, as well as the structuring of this compromise.

different coordination logics as well as related moral considerations. Through this composition they achieve to be neither “just” a collective, nor “just” a company. This article thus contributes to literature on coordination in organizations and particularly extends Thévenot’s work on organizations as compromise devices, by adding the consideration of coordination based on familiarity.

The article also contributes to literature dealing with moral issues in economic processes: It introduces a description of a moral sense that is suitable for composite relations, the aspiration to ‘not go too far’. Not going too far addresses the attempt to not totally sacrifice the particular for the general and vice versa. It also points toward the feeling of injustice that is experienced when relationships are characterized as either/or, although they are neither/nor.
Using the case study of two collective firms, the paper shows how alternative organizations try to value different ideas of justice by composing member-relations that mediate between the particular and the general. For future research, it would be interesting to use the analytical lens of the composite relation to understand how conventional organizations compose member-relations that integrate the need for formalization and standardization as well as making space for subjectivity and autonomy of the workforce.

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Appendix V: Duality, uncertainty and management consultancy as practice: navigating conflicting regimes of engagement

Abstract:
The literature describes management consultants as both insiders and outsiders; personal and professional; experts and pragmatists. Transgressive, dual practices do not obviously fit the certainty-seeking mould of the corporations paying consultants‘ wages; yet straddling dualities is a repeated motif in consultants‘ work. We pursue this puzzle, wondering why this pattern of dualities arises. To do so, we draw on Thevenot’s ‚regimes of engagement‘. Its distinction between rationalistic, hierarchical ‚planning‘ and more locally rooted, interpersonal ‚familiar‘ coordination helps cohesively theorise these formerly disparate dualities. This facilitates a comparative case study of consultancy engagements in a large hospital and small tech-cooperative. Through this, we identify consultants as attempting to hold together familiarity and planning to mitigate uncertainty between the two. This uncertainty, highly prominent in their client organizations, characterises the post-Fordist capitalism during which contemporary consultancy has thrived. Contemporary consultancy practices balance dualities to mitigate their clients‘ uncertainty between familiarity and planning.
Keywords: duality, evaluation, management consultants, practices, Regimes of Engagement, uncertainty

Introduction

Advice; evaluations; coaching; education; filling temporary vacancies; planning and implementing changes (Furusten, 2009; Johansson, 2004; Salaman, 2002; Waisberg and Nelson, 2018; Wright, 2000): today's management consultants play a staggering range of roles. Where once consultants were demanded for specialised skills, today they seem to fill whatever gaps organisations face (McKenna, 2006). If the traditional firm remains the muscle and bone of contemporary capitalism, consultancy has become its connective tissue.

While observing consultancy work's rapid rise is simple, understanding it is less so. Early writing problematised consultants' success (Ernst and Kieser, 2002), explaining it in terms of their rhetorical skill (Alvesson, 1993), institutional positions (Saint-Martin, 1998) and histories (Kipping, 1999). More recent studies have approached grounded analyses of consultants' interactions within client organisations (Faust, 2012; Heusinkveld and Visscher, 2012). This literature on consultants' grounded practices is vital to understanding how consultants shape client relationships and win the repeat business on which they rely (Wright, 2000). However, focusing on consultants' practices also raises fresh questions. Across studies, consultants emerge as embedded within dualities. They lie both within and without organisational boundaries (Sturdy et al., 2009); blur personal-professional boundaries (Sturdy et al., 2006); and move between grounded pragmatism and technical expertise (Berglund and Werr, 2000). Highlighting different types of duality, such studies share an image of consultants as dual and conflicted (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003). This leads us to wonder given firms characteristically seek certainty and consultants pursue their custom, why have such uncertain, conflicted practices become so widespread in contemporary consultancy?

This paper addresses this question through two detailed case studies of consultancy work. These it theorises through Thévenot's (2001b) *regimes of engagement* framework. Through Thévenot's concepts of 'planned action' and 'familiar engagement' it theorises consultants' multiple dualities in terms of different modes of agency associated with different normative orientations. This reveals consultants' struggles to hold together these different types of agency in organisations facing uncertainty between them. Thus this paper offers an

integrative theorisation of consultants' several dualities which helps explain their importance to consultants' practice.

Consultants' dual practices

The consultancy literature attempts to understand consultants' work and explain their rapid rise. Key strands focus on consultants' positions of knowledge, institutional influence, and persuasive capabilities (Ernst and Kieser, 2002). These insights into consultants' informational, discursive and institutional advantages tell us something about consultants' work and demonstrate how well-positioned consultants are to sell their services (Alvesson, 1993; Engwall, 2012).

Yet we must complement them with more grounded understandings of how consultants enact such advantages in practice (Heusinkveld and Visscher, 2012). With consultants relying on repeat business (Wright, 2000), we cannot understand their continued popularity without explaining their work during client engagements. Nor can we understand consultants' work itself, and how it shapes organisational life.

Consequently, a literature on consultants' practices has developed. While such studies tend to focus on diverse specific elements of consultants' work (Sturdy et al., 2006), we can discern a pattern across them. In three ways, this literature describes consultants and their practices in terms of dualities. They are both insiders and outsiders; personal and professional; experts and pragmatists: neither one thing nor the other.

First, writers emphasise consultants' position as neither within nor without organisational boundaries. Czarniawska and Mazza (2003) explore this liminal position from consultants' own perspectives, emphasising its precarity. Sturdy et al (2009) highlight the multiple types of boundaries within a client firm, and how consultants manage their positions relative to each. A picture emerges of cognisant actors straddling complex organisational boundaries.

Second, consultants inhabit both professional and personal realms. Historical and institutional writers frequently consider consultants' rapid professionalisation and performance of expertise (McKenna, 2006; Saint-Martin, 1998) alongside their ability to form personal relationships with long-term clients (Wright, 2000). Sturdy et al (2006) highlight exactly this ability to straddle the personal and the professional.

Third, consultants are characterised as combining abstract expertise and local pragmatism. Accounts of them as knowledge actors frequently emphasise the former (Alvesson, 1993), while others emphasise their local, improvised work (Furusten, 2009). Others specifically highlight how consultants balance abstract expertise and standardised solutions with local knowledge and innovation (Fincham et al., 2008; Waisberg and Nelson, 2018; Wright et al., 2012).

We suggest that these three dualities are consonant with one another. We can imagine a professional, external expert offering theoretically informed insights; or a more situated, pragmatic consultant thrashing out local solutions over a drink. This diptych piqued our curiosity: these transgressive, dual practices do not obviously fit the certainty-seeking corporate mould (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). So why do consultants seeking corporate customers thus position themselves?

Writers have attempted to address this question with regard to the individual dualities consultants display. They characteristically cast consultants as engaging in uncertain, dual practices because organizations face uncertainties of their own (Berglund and Werr, 2000; Clark and Salaman, 1998; Schuyt and Schuijt, 1998; Sturdy, 1997). In this view, consultants must inhabit ambiguous, liminal spaces to resolve the problems residing there (Alvesson, 1993; Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003).

We think that such claims are true, but insufficiently specific. Certainly, consultants address uncertainty, but, bluntly, who doesn't? A substantive explanation must narrow down *what type* of uncertainty they address. Equally, contemporary consultancy is a recent phenomenon. Explaining its explosion as a practice means explaining what changed to prompt this development. Given organizational uncertainty is perennial (Thévenot, 2001a), uncertainty itself cannot explain contemporary consultancy's spread (Fincham, 2002).

Consequently, some writers attempt to specify the type of uncertainty consultants engage with. They highlighting globalisation's turbulence (Fincham, 1999); or a predicted dynamic, fast-moving future (Bloomfield and Vurdubakis, 1994). Others suggest internal factors: increasingly differentiated departments whose lateral dependencies undercut traditional hierarchies (Ernst and Kieser, 2002); or decreasing internal 'slack' necessitating external resources for 'flexibility' (Furusten, 2009).

Each of these factors might create uncertainty, which consultants might help with. But not all consultancy problems are problems of globalisation, or departmental differentiation. These individual accounts cannot explain consultancy as a broad practice.

Yet together, these plural uncertainties hint at a broader explanation. They share a family resemblance, all arising as organizations work less through traditional Fordist hierarchies, and more through flexible networks, interorganisational dependencies and diversified organisational forms. Changes like these emerged in the Mid-Twentieth Century, underpinned by a 'new spirit of capitalism' which prioritised flexible dynamism over hierarchical stability (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005). Challenges become decreasingly about optimising production chains, and increasingly about negotiating ever-more turbulent external environments alongside conflicting internal priorities.

We therefore suggest an explanation of consultants' dual practices in terms of the uncertainty arising from this particular historical transformation. Encouragingly, it corresponds with the period during which contemporary consultancy rose as a practice. Pursuing this thought, we next review the rise of contemporary consultancy and this new logic of capitalist accumulation.

Consultancy and new capitalism

People have long charged for management advice. By the early Twentieth Century, companies provided such advice internationally (Kipping, 1999). However, these were different practitioners to today's consultants. With roots in engineering and cost-accountancy (McKenna, 2006), they focused on 'shop floor' improvement through technical expertise (Kipping, 1999, p.215) in fields like 'scientific management'.

Consultants we would recognise today grew prominent from the Mid-Twentieth Century. These consultants augmented scientific management expertise with organizational development and human relations techniques. Characteristically, they migrated from America to Europe through multinational clients (Kipping, 1999). They worked across a breadth of engagements comparable to today's consultants, including strategy, human resources and management development (Wright, 2000). This contemporary consultancy grew prominent around the 1960s.

This coincided with major changes in the conditions and organization of capitalist production and profit accumulation. This precipitated the so-called ‘post-Fordist economy’ (Jessop, 1993) or ‘knowledge economy’ (Powell and Snellman, 2004). With it came changes in organizational structures, and new ideas of good governance, rationality and efficiency.

The Fordist-Taylorist ideal had been replaced by a new image of a flexible, lean, learning organization (Womack et al., 1990). Managerial discourse critiqued bureaucracy’s rigidity and lauded organic, flexible forms and processes (Du Gay, 1994). ‘New management’ saw organizational boundaries become more porous as firms emphasised their globalized ‘networks’; and decreasingly secure employees considered their contacts, ‘personal capital’ and consequent future employment prospects (Garsten, 1999; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005).

These changes reshaped organization-employee relationships. ‘New’, post-bureaucratic management techniques (Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994) shifted governance and coordination burdens from external controls and structures towards responsible, flexible, self-motivated employees. New management aimed to utilise employees’ ‘subjective potentials’: capacities not amenable to hierarchic control, like personal aspirations and views. Workers thus aqcuired greater scope, but also new pressures and insecurities (Lohr, 2003).

This was not only a transformation of organizational practices, but of ideas about what good organization was. Where clear boundaries were once valued, they were increasingly seen as impediments to the good organization’s flexible dynamism. Behaviour once viewed as appropriately professional became seen as stuffy and traditional. Such observed changes in management practice reflected a shift in ideals of what ‘good organizing’ involved.

Yet none of these movements was total. Even as spaces for the particular and subjective opened up, efforts to standardise and control continued (Hodgson, 2004). Management based on solid, permanent contracts was not replaced, but complicated, by personal relationships’ growing importance (Thévenot, 2007). Shifts in ideals of the good organization were not total and unambiguous but partial and contextually dependent.

Consultants flourished under new management. While still selling technical expertise in fields like process optimization, they also offered to help managers ‘engage’ with ‘empowered’, ‘enterprising’ and ‘innovative’ employees (Fernandez

and Moldogaziev, 2013; Garsten, 1999; Wright, 2000). They increasingly promoted themselves as generalist professionals (McKenna, 2006): not mere carriers of professional knowledge, but high-capacity individuals. This generalism, combined with a newfound focus on strategy, enabled repeat engagements and extensive senior contact. Personal relationships with, and recommendations by, clients thus became increasingly important in selling consultants' wares (Sturdy et al., 2006; Wright, 2000). Consultants thrived in, and through, new management.

New management's uncertainties echo the dualities attributed to consultants. Both relate ambivalently to organizational boundaries, ideals of professionalism and knowledge. Indeed, the narrative above suggests consultants' observed dualities partly responded to 'new' organizations' increasingly ambiguous practices and ideals. Under new management's conflicting ideals, consultants had to be both professional experts and locally competent practitioners. This uncertainty grew during contemporary consultants' popularisation in the 1960s, and remains profound today.

Consequently, this study explores the possibility that consultants' dualities respond to uncertainty between these different ideals and practices of organizing. This could explain contemporary consultancy's dualities in a manner coherent with our understanding of the historic forces surrounding its popularisation. This will require a pragmatist theorisation sensitive to this socio-economic change and the difference between styles of coordination and evaluation that followed it.

Regimes of engagement

Laurent Thévenot's (2001b) 'regimes of engagement' fits this bill. 'Regimes' are different ways of engaging with the world: different modes of agency exhibited at different times. But they are not only ways of acting. Thévenot associates different modes of action with the pursuit of different types of goal ('good') and consequent different ways of seeing the world and receiving information. The regimes bring together accounts of people's coordinative and evaluative practices.

The different regimes through which we act emerge from the different types of good we seek. For Thévenot, every action seeks some 'good' or other. Even if action is not instrumentally rational, it cannot be reduced to unconscious habit, since every engagement aims for a 'good', even if that 'good' is as simple as personal convenience. Nevertheless, one's chosen good affects how one

approaches one's environment: the 'formatting of reality depends on a form of evaluation that singles out what is relevant'. Engagement with the world 'depends on the way the agent captures the world within [that] format' (Thévenot, 2002, p.54).

This 'formatting' is more than a question of perception and can entail materially adapting one's environment. Aligned with broader development in French pragmatism (Brandl et al., 2014; Hennion and Muecke, 2016), 'regimes of engagement' describe a distributed, embedded, emergent agency reliant on both people and their socio-material environment being appropriately 'prepared'. Regimes of engagement are thus more than forms of agency, but entail 'properly disposed environment[s]' (Thévenot, 2011, p.48).

These engagements thus intertwine the good someone seeks, the actions they undertake, and the response received from their environment. They therefore entail, but cannot be reduced to, the forms of knowledge (Waisberg and Nelson, 2018), rhetoric (Berglund and Werr, 2000) and institutional contexts (Saint-Martin, 1998) the literature highlights as important to consultants' work.

The regimes help theorise the dualities the literature attributes to consultants. Two 'regimes of engagement' are 'planning' and 'familiarity'. They distinguish between rational-purposive plans based on conventional or standardized knowledge and 'agency of the most personal or intimate kind' (Thévenot, 2001b, p.57). The distinction between *planning* and *familiarity* encompasses the distinctions between our two pictures of the consultant: pragmatist and theoretician; local insider and outside expert; professional and confidant.

Thévenot (2007, pp.418–419) also uses the distinction between planning and familiarity to theorise the rise of 'new capitalism'. Fordist capitalism was characterised by strong reliance on planning, with its production-line logic, rationalist coordination and scientific-rational values. Post-Fordist accumulation introduced a focus on subjectivity, personal connections and interpersonal coordination: all elements of the familiar. New management thus saw new uncertainty between the two regimes.This uncertainty incorporates, but remains irreducible to, the uncertainties others suggest consultants address: the shift from hierarchy to lateral ties (Ernst and Kieser, 2002), or the tension between long-term plans and flexible arrangements built on personal ties (Furusten, 2009).

Thévenot's 'regimes of engagement' theorise both consultants' dualities and the 'new' capitalism apparently associated with their rise.

We thus utilise the concepts of planning and familiarity in analysing our cases. Combined with two other regimes – 'exploration' (Auray, 2007) and 'public justification' (Boltanski and Thévenot, 2006), they provide a detailed repertoire of potential action, which has been useful to social researchers exploring relations between knowledge and practices (Howard-Grenville and Carlile, 2006), between information, practice and morality (Blok and Meilvang, 2015), between subject-positions and participatory formats (Meriluoto, 2018) and standard-setting and testing (Ponte and Cheyns, 2013). Organisational scholars have used the framework to theorize bricolage (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010). Because they capture the tensions the consultancy literature describes, this study focuses on planning and familiarity. Consequently, we now elaborate these regimes.

Planning

Consultants engage extensively in planning (Table 1). This regime approaches what is usually seen as standard intentional action: here, people are concerned with achieving a plan. A plan need not be elaborate: simply writing an e-mail can be a plan. To act according to intentional planning, one needs an environment equipped with functionally usable objects. They guarantee stability for planning and help me control, measure and assess my actions. In planning, 'the environment is seized in a format of functional capacity'. Action depends on 'intentional-planning agency and instrumental-functional capacity' (Thévenot, 2001b).

It is not only the material environment that must be functionally usable. 'Planned' coordination assumes that others are 'also' rational actors pursuing plans. Planning thus supports coordination with unknown others following the same rules and conventions (Thévenot, 1984), but not adjustment based on personal knowledge or intimacy. In organizations, plans often get 'standardized': converted into recurrent formats applicable across contexts. Standards can thus reduce phenomena to properties, oppressing other regimes of engagement (Thévenot, 2009). (Standardized) planning affiliates with the strong, hierarchical structures and standard operating procedures of the classical Weberian bureaucracy or

Taylorist firm. Consultants adeptly navigate this regime when deploying standard management models or formal ‘transformation’ plans.

Table 1 - regimes of familiarity and planning (adapted from Thévenot, 2001b, p.15)

	Familiarity	**Planning**
Good	Personal and local convenience, within familiar milieu	Successful conventional action
Form of reality engaged	Usual and used surroundings providing a distributed capacity	Functional instrument
Format of relevant information	Local, idiosyncratic perceptual clue	Ordinary semantics of action
Form of agency construed	Personality attached to their entourage	Planner

Familiarity

Familiarity is not based on the kind of intentionality characterising planned engagement. Nevertheless, it has its own reflexivity, which concepts like routine, habit or *habitus* neglect. The ‘good’ participants seek is ‘the kind of confidence that lies in a familiarly accommodated environment’ (Thévenot, 2019, p.7). This they achieve through dynamic, non-teleological relationships with the human and non-human entities of their familiar surroundings. In familiarity, my relationship with my surroundings relies on local, personal clues. What I am doing, how and why cannot easily be communicated to those not familiar with me.

Familiarity matters not only to our most intimate relationships, but also in the workplace. This is particularly true in the flexible, project-based, ‘empowered’ organizations ‘new management’ promoted. Where coordination occurs less through standardization and formality, interpersonal familiarity and ‘networks’ become more important. Activities the literature attributes to consultants – like becoming embedded in a department, innovating and forming close, trusting client relationships – entail working adeptly through familiarity.

Consultants and the regimes of engagement

Thévenot thus resists reducing actors to one model of agency, like rational choice or habitus, instead analytically distinguishing conventional and standardized (planned) agency from more personal (familiar) forms. As argued above, this distinction helps conceptualise consultants' multiple dualities alongside the uncertainties organizations experienced following 'new management'. Consequently, this study investigates consultants' practices and dualities through Thévenot's framework. It asks, 'how and why do management consultants navigate the coordinative and evaluative uncertainty between familiarity and planning?'.

Research design

We operationalised the regimes of engagement within a comparative case study on consultants' grounded practices. Given our theoretical focus, we sought sites in which any tensions between familiarity and planning would be highly 'observable' (Pettigrew, 1990): a UK web-development start-up called the 'Good Tech Collective' ('GTC') and a large hospital in England's National Health Service. These had the added advantages of contrasting sizes, structures and sectors. Full accounts of the sites are provided below.

Each researcher gathered extensive observational, interview and documentary data from one site. Semi-structured interviews with consultants and others covered a diversity of topics including organisations' problems and consultants' responses. Meeting observations aimed to capture not only discussions' content, but also how those discussions occurred, and the tools (e.g. documents) used. GTC's comparatively more flexible governance arrangements also enabled a more flexible ethnographic approach including a workshop with participants discussing their organisations' relationship to Thévenot's model. This provided a rich data-set for our analyses (Table 2).

Table 2 - Data sources

Data source	**GTC**	**Hospital**
Observations	Flexible ethnography	49
Interviews	13	20
Documents	42	92

Overall duration/months	3	9

Our overall analytic aim was to identify consultants' working practices in relation to Thévenot's model. However, it is difficult to simply directly observe practices. They entail diverse constituent elements (like actions, objects, situations, discourses) and interconnections therebetween (Reckwitz, 2002). Not all of this can be directly observed, so attempts to directly induce practices risk jumping to conclusions. Accordingly, we followed a three-phase coding process designed to lead progressively from empirical observations to consultants' practices.

After sifting data to exclude material unrelated to consultants, we began by zooming in on a quarter of the data from one site. This we coded inductively under headings drawn from Thévenot's framework: situations, objects, actions, discourses and 'goods'. This provided us with a theoretically relevant account of our data's content.

Second, we asked how these diverse elements combined into practices. Because the headings under which we had coded described distinct but related phenomena, passages were frequently coded under multiple codes. This simultaneous coding was used to indicate, for example, that a given 'object' was being used in a given 'situation'. In this analytic phase, we interrogated these overlaps, seeking patterns in the combinations of codes used to describe the same passages. We zoomed in on the most common such overlaps to develop hypotheses about the practices in which the coded items were involved. We tested these hypotheses against further data, affirming, adapting or discarding them as appropriate. Through this process, we developed a second-round coding structure describing practices themselves.

Finally, we coded the remaining data using the practice codes identified through our first and second phases. Where an extract corresponded to an existing code, we simply coded it therein. Where it did not, we coded it in the same inductive detail as the first tranche of data. This enabled the equally robust identification of new practices unidentified in our first and second phases. We thus retained our

detailed gaze upon our data while avoiding excessive detail during routine coding. Figure 1 illustrates this analysis process.

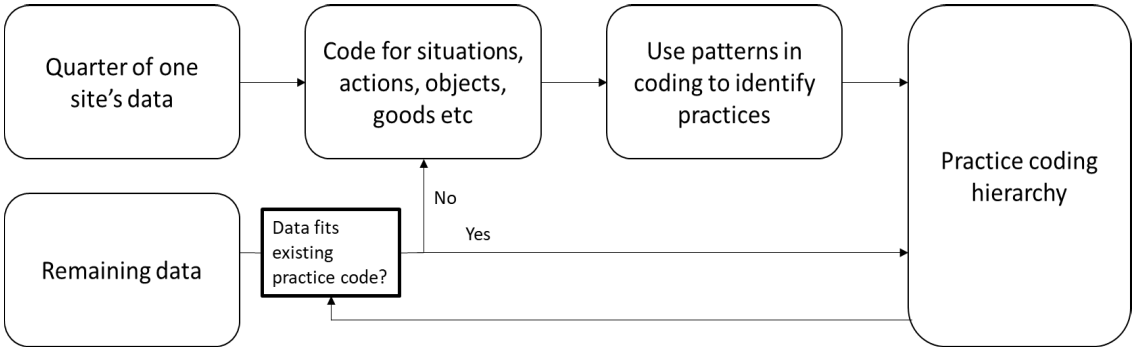

Figure 1 - Analysis process

Findings

We present our findings through four narratives: describing consultants' work at first the GTC, then second the hospital; then third and fourth detailing the problems they faced at each site. From each, we then abstract the practices we coded. These accounts develop a common theme across sites: notwithstanding differences in exactly what consultants did, their work involved alleviating coordinative and normative tensions by navigating between familiarity and planning.

Combining familiarity and planning

Good Tech Collective

GTC began when two friends formed a Limited Liability Partnership. During the first year, they recruited three new partners from their extended friendship circles. The organisation's size and the familiarity between members enabled coordination based on friendship, respect, and trust, with few formal structures and no formal hierarchies. Their 'office' was one partner's kitchen. The founding partners considered each other comparably competent and with equal responsibility. Decisions were informal and ideally consensual.

GTC's aversion to traditional bureaucracy was partly fuelled by members' prior experiences. Three founding partners used to work in a large corporate bureaucracy. Others also described feeling alienated and depressed in prior jobs in more conventional organisations:

> There was no chance you could get involved in anything else. It was like: ‘This is your role. This is what you're here to do. Come here. Go home. That's it.’ (Member 1)
>
> I found myself walking into a future that was being determined because I wasn't making decisions for myself. (Member 2)

Both accounts express unease about working environments without space for self-expression and autonomy. There, planning seems to shape working life so thoroughly that the future seems emptied of meaning, and bureaucratic structures crowd out personal connections with colleagues. Conversely, one GTC member valued their relationship to another member and GTC itself:

> C had started like two weeks before I did. And it was really, really good because like we work in very similar ways and we both love GTC in equal measure, C and I, I think. So we have this like camaraderie from the start I had it with everyone but I had the camaraderie with C, which I still have. And we were kind of just going on this crazy like adventure together. Because it was crazy and it was an adventure. It still is and then I kind of I just managed to pick stuff up quite quickly as well because I was just so into it. I've been so sad in my previous job. And then this was just a complete escape.

As a collective based on intimate, personal relations, caring for one another and preferring consensus to hierarchy was central to GTC’s operations. However, as GTC grew and hired staff of increasingly varied experience, making everyone a partner became no longer viable. With a larger organisation, more predictability was desired. One member described ‘trying to move towards a more systematized company; there shouldn't be any decisions, because there are already rules in place for anything’. As GTC grew, its members increasingly desired not only its basis on intimate, personal relations, but the stability of ‘systematized’ organisation.

GTC thus faced a tension between developing structures that provided clarity and predictability and avoiding the overstructured, alienating bureaucratic workplaces characterising members’ prior experiences. Consequently, GTC sought structures

which could enable growth while preserving its familiar, non-hierarchical logic. This was deeply challenging. One member described feeling ‘exhausted by constantly trying to invent this new honest, just company thing’. ‘Rather than running a business it had felt like inventing the concept of a business’, they explained. Significant uncertainty remained about how – and whether – one could construct formal structures while protecting the familiar relations underpinning GTC’s coordination and governance.

When research began, they had transitioned into being a co-op working through ‘Sociocratic’ practices. This entailed devolving decisions to themed, semi-autonomous working groups (‘circles’), which emphasised hearing all voices before consent-based decisions. To support this transition, GTC had hired a consultant. Though not a member, they worked regularly with GTC, chaired the HR circle and organized business, organizational and personal development training. While GTC had been working with the ‘circles’ structure for almost two years, a lingering uncertainty remained about the type of organization they should be: how should the less formal, sometimes intimate coordination on which they were founded combine with the planning that could offer a growing organisation clarity and predictability? It was this uncertainty the consultant was to address.

Conventional organisations use hierarchical management to direct people’s activities. Thus a core challenge for the consultant was how to provide coordination while helping GTC remain ‘without bosses’. The consultant addressed this through ‘the leader’, a cognitive-normative figure that narrates how people can competently plan, while empathizing with others’ particular situations and adjusting plans to unpredictable idiosyncrasies. The consultant discursively created and shaped this version of leadership through training and documentation. GTC Wiki’s ‘Leading and Managing’ entry reads:

> Everybody at GTC leads and manages. That means everyone takes responsibility for making sure they understand – and help generate – the direction in which we are heading. Everyone also helps to create that future by proactively taking action that they believe will move themselves and the cooperative forward positively.

Leading, the entry continues, is about ‘being yourself’; ‘there’s no right way to be’. It is not about ‘delegation, controlling or dominating other people’ but ‘engaging

with and supporting other people as they grow and develop, when they want to, and at their own pace'. The leader understands how to further the organization in the direction of their plans, while simultaneously aware of and able to utilize her and her colleagues' particular weaknesses and strengths. They are always ultimately responsible towards the collective. Through this 'leader' identity, the consultant *narrows regime differences* between planning and familiarity*,* holding them together within individual 'leaders'.

Another element of familiar organisation that GTC wanted to preserve was the informal support provided through mentor-like relationships. This was particularly important for those entering the organisation. In their beginnings, when recruitment was based on members' friendship circles, these relationships arose spontaneously. As it grew, GTC could no longer rely on this. Yet they eschewed the superior-subordinate relations traditional firms used to provide support. Consequently, the Consultant and HR Circle institutionalised 'mentoring', making 'mentor' a specified role 'supporting someone else who is going through a particular transition' (Wiki) and billable as work time. This helped value and guaranteed supportive relationships between experienced members and newcomers, without necessitating overarching hierarchies. It did so by *balancing familiarity and planning*, introducing selected elements of planning to a context from which it was more-or-less absent. But it did so to preserve elements of its erstwhile familiarity.

GTC wanted to preserve this familiarity as it grew. Some efforts to *balance familiarity and planning* thus focused on making styles of coordination enduring through *mediating forms*: objects that preserved compromises between the two. These partially standardised coordination while maintaining space for particularities, thus projecting elements of familiar coordination into the future and across GTC's growing scale. For instance, the consultant introduced a template for 'circle' meetings. This same template governed every circle, structurally standardising their functions. All meetings lasted an hour, including a check-in, review of the last meeting's actions, points from the standing agenda and other items. Decisions and actions were recorded separately against each discussion point, and any omitted items 'parked' for the next meeting. The template and limited timeframe partially standardized meetings. Simultaneously, it entrenched

elements of familiar engagement, from the ‘check-in’ to circles’ autonomy over topics discussed.

Hospital

We found similar patterns at our second site. Like many care organisations, the Hospital was both a complex of plans and hierarchies, and a site of familiar care (Thévenot, 2009, pp.807-08). Like many English hospitals, it faced significant resource shortages, which it attempted to address through formal savings plans. Senior managers had called in consultants in response to difficulties making these plans realities.

The underlying reasons for this first became clear when we observed a series of similarly formatted meetings to review each division’s spending.

> Managers were discussing a division’s spending, using standard budgetary information. A central manager asked why certain wards had recently begun to overspend their budgets. It ‘could just be some individual patient we’ve done something weird with’ replied a divisional manager. The discussion moved on. (Fieldnotes paraphrase)

Central managers saw the budgetary plans asked about above as vital to the hospital: their fulfilment was what made next year ‘do-able’. Yet this standardized planning injunction meets a response based on a particular patient’s esoteric requirements. Their care required ‘something weird’ which formal budgets could not foresee. The divisional manager’s language reinforces this deviation from the conventional. ‘Something weird’ is nonspecific, indexically denoting unknown steps to satisfy unconventional needs. Thévenot (2009) characterises caregiving as entailing familiar concern for patients’ ease. Here, appealing to familiar concerns for particularity sidesteps injunctions to follow budgetary plans.

This duality typified a common tension in the hospital: between highly standardised financial planning, and more clinical coordination which combined this familiarity with less standardised plans. The former was particularly prominent at the hospital’s corporate centre, where managers experienced regulatory pressure to guarantee financial performance. The latter became more evident the closer one got to service delivery. Staff in a clinical service ‘division’ displayed concern for a waiting room becoming ‘jumpy’ or about the ‘spate of quite nasty

incidents that are scaring our staff to the point they don't want to come to work'. Such concerns for staff ease or a space's 'feel' exemplifies this familiarity.

This did not mean that divisions neglected central savings requirements. But their approach to them combined (unstandardized) plans with familiar concerns, jarring with the centre's standardized planning. One divisional manager cast savings not as goods to pursue, but unavoidable boundary conditions within which to pursue one's true goals.

> So, none of the efficiencies – none of the schemes to generate efficiencies, I would say, were brilliant. They're just some – we get down to what is palatable and what's not. (Interview, divisional manager)

This account certainly evidences (unstandardised) planning. 'Schemes…to generate efficiencies' describes efforts to fulfil financial plans. Yet these are not pursued as goods in themselves, but acknowledged as obligations to be selected based on which is 'palatable', or least discomfiting. Even as divisions respond to central savings plans, decisions based on familiar ease are not far away. This difference in how work was coordinated and evaluated precipitated the planned-familiar uncertainty exemplified at the start of this subsection.

Consequently, central managers had commissioned external consultants to address this tension, and ensure financial plans were realised. A group of external and internal consultants created and staffed the 'Projects Office'. It sat outside the divisions, structuring their work and providing related advice to the centre. From this office, consultants worked to *balance* divisions' various modes of coordination to better fit central planning. They problematised the organisation's diversity of ways of 'doing change' as a chaotic set of particular endeavours:

> So there's lots of people fixing lots of things all at the same time, but the impact of the fix, or their change, isn't felt outside their team because you're just absorbed within the walls of their own team…So if we can have a standard way of, of managing, delivering, reporting and then realising benefit from change, then all those small changes ought to start reflecting in a much bigger improvement package. (Interview, consultant)

For this consultant, the problem with local ‘fix[es]’ was that they were unassociated with wider planning. Only alignment with ‘a standard way’ of working can ‘realis[e]’ them as something transcending their team’s ‘walls’. Unstandardised particular efforts cannot aggregate to a general benefit.

Consultants thus deployed a complex documentary infrastructure to integrate divisional efforts into a standardised framework. This enabled upwards reporting on aggregates of schemes categorised by – say – division or ‘risk’ level. The right-hand half of Figure 3 represents these data and reporting processes. A Cost Improvement Plan (‘CIP’) Tracker database included one row per ‘saving’, recording standardised information about each, enabling aggregation and reporting. This integrated divisional activity into a standardised planning structure. As consultants saw it, they were *balancing familiarity and planning* by harmonising divisional coordinative styles with the centre’s standardised plans.

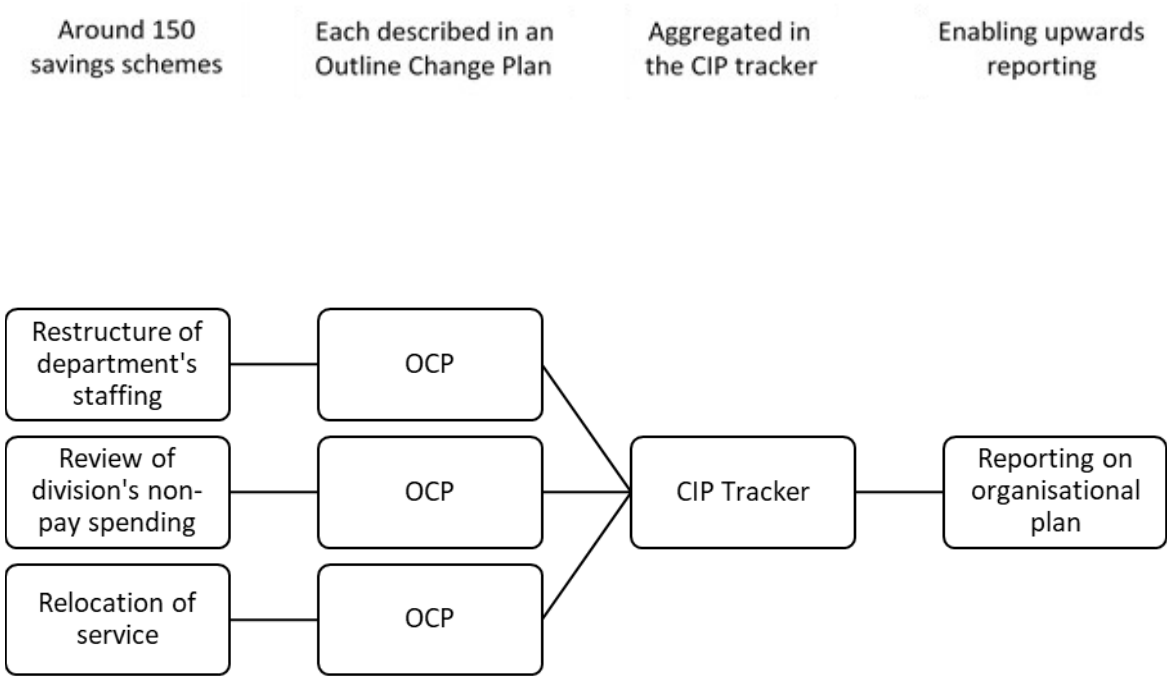

Figure 2 - Hospital documentary infrastructure

Consultants could have constructed these data simply by demanding those managing savings schemes populate their CIP Tracker row. Instead, they asked each scheme to fill out largely free-text ‘Outline Change Plans’ (OCPs). These were more standardised than characteristic of divisional work, but less than central reporting. From these, consultants abstracted the CIP Tracker’s standardised

information. This created a gentler, stepwise movement from divisions' familiarity and unstandardised plans to the centre's standardised planning. This gentler movement helped *narrow* apparent gaps between *regimes*.

Consultants not only monitored savings schemes but also helped evaluate potential projects. Potential schemes were supposed to offer a four-to-one 'return on investment' (RoI): an evaluative criterion tailored to ensure financial plan fulfilment. Initiatives aiming to simply improve bedside quality struggled to meet this standard, so consultants could have rejected them out-of-hand. They did not:

> There are real examples of [such initiatives] and quite often, it's because you can't realise the money. So – a lot of Quality Programmes that improve quality at the bedside and hence release clinical time to go and do more stuff or go and do other stuff; so you almost end up with a notional four-to-one argument. (Interview, consultant)

'Programmes' to 'improve quality at the bedside' deploy elements of planning ('programmes') to pursue patient ease in a domain ('the bedside') which is both intimate and public. Initiatives based there may poorly comply with a standardised four-to-one RoI criterion. Yet consultants reframed this criterion to suit such schemes through 'a notional four-to-one argument'. This arrangement is precarious: 'notional' RoI no longer measures real money; surrounding language is hedged ('almost') and indexical ('more stuff…other stuff') emphasising both this composition's uncertainty and familiar ingredients. But it limits the disputes consultants could have caused by rejecting quality improvement initiatives germane to a hospital. The consultant thus *narrows regime differences*, using this adapted, 'notional' 4:1 criterion to minimise the tension between familiarity and planning. Like the structure of documents through which divisional familiarity becomes central planning, this modified criterion becomes a coordinative device legible in terms of either planning or familiarity: it becomes a *mediating form*.

While their work differed, both sites' consultants strived to hold together planning and familiarity in three ways. They *balanced regimes*: where they felt either planning or familiarity contextually overabundant, they introduced more of the other. They *narrowed regime differences*, minimising the tension between them. And they supported these efforts by *creating and deploying mediating* forms:

objects legible in terms of both planning and familiarity. Seen through Thévenot's lens, these practices attempt to hold together these two regimes of engagement.

Resistance

Yet Thévenot (2001b) highlights also that our engagements face a 'resistant… world'. As observed above, adapting the modes of coordination and evaluation used in environments meant introducing new *mediating forms* to them. As objects managing the uncertainty between regimes of engagement, they were ripe for critique.

Good Tech Collective

Among the GTC consultant's core functions was chairing the HR Circle. Through the Circle's training, policies, guidelines, mediation and conflict resolution, this role spanned the consultant's efforts to navigate familiarity and planning. Circle members understood the importance of familiar coordination. They emphasised the importance of direct personal interaction, and would seek one-to-one conversations to address emergent conflicts.

Not wholly part of the collective, the consultant was poorly suited to address (inter)personal problems whose resolution required existing intimate relationships. Other Circle members worked at the office daily, naturally developing closer relationships with co-workers. They could thus address the 'people' problems the Circle focused on without its official involvement. This imbalance in capacities between the consultant and other members precipitated a critical moment. In the consultant's absence, Anna, a circle member, voiced discomfort with their approach:

> We do things, but I don't think they have priority. We create a lot of policies and I am not sure if this should be our job, to create a policy on how to create a proposal. And maybe it's just because that does not interest me or because I have too much on, but I think the HR Circle should be about ensuring people feel happy. (Fieldnotes, paraphrase.)

This statement casts planning ('policies') and familiarity ('ensuring people feel happy') into conflict. Anna devalues policymaking in favour of personal engagement directed towards members' *ease*. She then discussed the specific nature of the Circle's problems with another member. The problems the HR Circle

addressed requires a more practical and active approach, they suggested; whereas the consultant currently emphasized policies and documentation. Consequently, Circle minutes recorded the following proposal:

> We should only have HR Circle meetings when a people issue arises and we need to discuss/sort it out. The HR Circle will continue, taking on a more active role rather than focusing on documentation. Clarifying Questions: This will make us a more reactive body rather than a proactive body. Is this right? Shall we try it and see what happens?.

The clarifying question concluding the proposal highlights a trade-off between longer-term planning and more 'reactive', contingent familiarity. While the consultant worked to link planning and familiarity, others *surfaced the tension* between them.

Simultaneously, they criticised a perceived overabundance of new policies and procedures. Precisely because GTC was largely characterised by familiarity, the consultant was rapidly introducing new policies. These *mediating forms* were intended to clarify how work was to be coordinated. Yet even HR Circle members – involved in introducing these forms – found their proliferation overwhelming. While standards and *mediating forms* are intended to clarify and solidify how coordination should proceed, introducing many at once left each one little time to become established. This introduced a new quality of uncertainty: it was hard to know to which standard to turn, or why so many had to be devised. This contributed to Circle members' critique of the consultants' work and worry that coordination had turned too much towards the planned.

Hospital

GTC's consultant was not alone in facing criticism. As noted above, Hospital consultants attempted to monitor and standardise initiatives previously pursued within divisions. Unsurprisingly, some saw this as intrusive or unhelpful. Consequently, consultants found gathering timely, accurate information challenging. The undertaking's mammoth scale did not help: they attempted to aggregate and standardise some 150 individual initiatives.

These dangers were demonstrated when consultants discovered a major 'gap' in their plans. Around a third of the value of one division's CIPs were found not to be backed by robust plans. This left a gap in the Hospital's budget, based on which

divisions had thus far coordinated their work. Consultants faced an imperative to help construct a new budgetary compromise so coordination could continue. They presented their proposal to central managers:

> A consultant projected onto a screen proposed revised CIP targets. They uneasily explained that this was an unpolished Excel sheet designed to engage central managers in planning. While unaccompanied by Finance staff, they repeatedly emphasised the figures had been devised with Finance. Extensive questions followed. One manager asked the scale of the savings they were seeking. The consultant pointed to a figure, emphasising that the spreadsheet was a working document.
>
> Eventually, a manager said they did not recognise the figures provided for their division: it looked like the 'process had gone wrong'. They described the best-case scenario which would not happen 'in anyone's dreams'. Another manager said that the comment about 'in anyone's dreams' was important: they needed realism, not 'paper' exercises. Another described themselves as 'immensely irritated': why were Finance absent? They were not even getting to reality when discussing a division whose meeting 'you sat in on, [consultant]'. If they 'can't do that correctly', the manager continued, they had 'no faith' in the other figures. They ended the meeting early.

For consultants, this should have been a moment where new targets were agreed to monitor and evaluate divisional work. Instead, they found their ability to reflect divisional reality critiqued and their figures labelled 'paper' exercises: mere plans. They could not become real 'in anyone's dreams' – a phrase invoking intimate, gut judgements about plausibility. Consultants' planning and divisional intuitions were at odds, as managers *surfaced the tension between familiarity and planning*. Central managers lost 'faith' in consultants' ability to hold these regimes of engagement together. That this precipitated the meeting's early close emphasises its importance to coordination.

Such critiques were exacerbated by the relatively unestablished nature of the *mediating forms* they targeted. Here, pressure is placed on a budgetary object formatted as a 'working' Excel sheet. Unlike more polished documents, such devices seem open to continual changes. This is emphasised by the consultant's apologetic emphasis that this was a working document and their apparent uneasiness about it. Particularly without finance managers' authorising presence, this leaves this object unestablished as a form.

The forms consultants introduced faced frequent criticism and difficulties capturing the reality they attempted to reflect. Characteristically, consultants responded to this by tweaking those objects. While designed to ensure they were better accepted, this in fact had the consequence of never allowing any one version of a form to become established. Each new document added to an already complex documentary landscape: consultants internally voiced concerns this was overwhelming for staff.

For instance, as external financial circumstances changed, central managers decided that consultants' use of CIPs to measure financial progress was no longer sufficient. Consultants responded with several new objects designed to measure, report and evaluate divisions' financial success, focusing on performance relative to budget. But these found mixed success:

> At a meeting held to review one division's financial performance against these new measures, the conversation turned to one service they highlighted as overspending. Central managers were pessimistic, noting that if it couldn't cover its costs, they would have to serve notice on it. 'Hard choices' would have to be made. But a divisional manager objected: the service *did* cover its costs. It was simply that they didn't reach their target profit. Central managers indicated concern for next year, but the conversation moved on. (Fieldnotes, paraphrase)

Two things happen here. First, central managers appear to misunderstand what the new measures indicate, assuming that negative figures suggested a service did not cover its costs. Second, a divisional manager juxtaposes this new measure (performance relative to budget) with another criterion (profit/loss), successfully avoiding negative evaluation. Normally, when a measure is established within an

organisation, this would not be so effective: the measure would still seem like the ‘right’ way to evaluate progress. But here, the new measures seemed insufficiently established to be thus taken-for-granted. The Hospital’s regular promulgation and amendment of measurement objects created an ever-more densely populated documentary landscape in which there was little time for new objects to be understood or established as measures.

Discussion

The foregoing sections describe consultants’ work in our two sites. In so doing, they highlight the five practices we coded within this study. We found three practices core to consultants’ daily work: *balancing* regimes of engagement; *narrowing* the differences therebetween; and creating *mediating forms* to manage those differences. These met with two forms of resistance: first, as named in the foregoing text, opponents sometimes *surfaced planned-familiar tensions* once again. Second, consultants in both sites saw their rapid promulgation of mediating forms lead to those objects appearing not as static, stable forms, but as a moving, unstable sequence. By analogy to the device designed to produce such illusions, we call this final practice *zoetroping*. Table 3 catalogues these practices.

Table 3 - Practices

	Description	**GTC example**	**Hospital example**
Balancing planning and familiarity	Introducing more of one regime of engagement, when perceiving the other as contextually overabundant	Institutionalization of mentoring	Standardising divisional savings efforts
Narrowing regime differences	Mitigating the distance and tension between planning and familiarity	‘The leader’	Gradual, stepwise movement from divisional work to standardised, aggregate planning data
Deploying mediating forms	Constructing and using objects that mediate	‘Circle‘ meetings	‘Notional’ four-to-one

	between regimes of engagement	template	RoI criterion
Surfacing planned-familiar tensions	Denying the link between familiar and planned engagement in consultants' practices	'We create a lot of policies […] but I think the HR circle should be about making sure that people feel happy.'	Implication consultants' plans are 'paper exercises'
Zoetroping	When overabundant, newly constructed devices perpetuate uncertainty	Rapidly introducing new policies through HR Circle	Frequently amending existing forms

It was striking to find similar practices in such ostensibly different organizations. GTC was a young, flexible cooperative employing under twenty people; the hospital a long-established bureaucracy employing thousands. Yet combining traditional bureaucratic organisation with a Post-Fordist interpersonal style, both were seized by planned-familiar uncertainty. Not only were they uncertain how to arrange their affairs in practice, they were also uncertain about what being a good organisation entailed. This difficulty – characteristic of modern organisations – explained consultants' presence and practices.

It also explained the relationships we found between these practices (see Figure 3). In both sites, consultants began by attempting to reduce this tension between planning and familiarity (*balancing, narrowing*). *Mediating forms* were important to achieving this because they made sense in terms of both familiarity and planning. Our organisations experienced tension between these two regimes of engagement, leaving staff unsure what type of environment they were encountering – how to 'grasp reality'. Legible in terms of both familiarity and planning, *mediating forms* seemed to grasp reality in a way which brought these regimes of engagement together.

However, *mediating forms* could also become focuses of resistance to consultants' practices. This could come from other actors, in the form of *surfacing*, which deployed *mediating forms* to highlight consultants' better correspondence to one

regime of engagement than the other. Equally, consultants' reliance on these *forms* could produce a resistance of its own, when *zoetroping* made their grip on reality seem transient. Thus consultants' efforts to mediate between regimes of engagement created (only) temporary respite from the uncertainty these sites experienced.

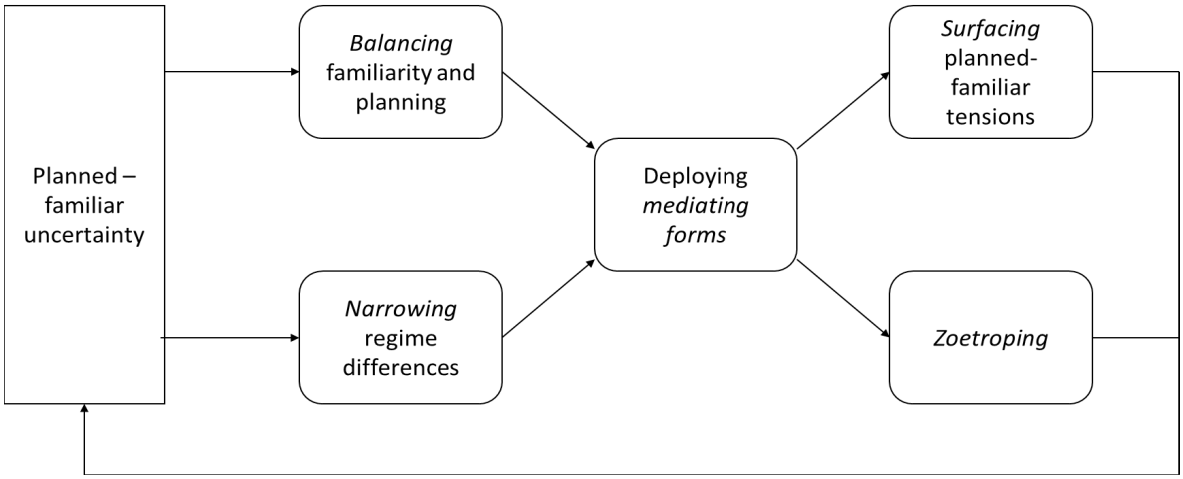

Figure 3 - Consultancy practices

The differences between the sites also had their roots in the types of uncertainty they faced. While both faced uncertainty between regimes of engagement, this was differently articulated in each site. Wishing to deploy planning to protect its familiar core, GTC was uncertain how to do so. The Hospital's uncertainty sprang instead from the tension between central plans and divisional particularity. Consequently, these common practices were differently articulated in each organization. For instance, GTC's *balancing* aimed at introducing new elements of planning across the organization; the hospital's version focused on extending existing planning into new domains. Thus the hospital's *mediating forms* took the shape of chains of documents reaching from central planning to divisional particularity; while GTC applied single forms throughout organizational domains. It was GTC's efforts to rapidly spread these forms across a relatively unplanned organization that precipitated *zoetroping* and *surfacing*: in the hospital, the routine disputation and replacement of these forms had a comparable effect.
Thévenot's approach is central to enabling these insights. His emphasis on uncertainty between regimes of engagement is core to our reading of consultants'

practices. Our identification of the role of *mediating forms* owes much to his highlighting of measurement devices. Without his emphasis on the 'resistant… world' our interventions encounter (Thévenot, 2001b), we might have restricted our gaze to consultants' own actions, missing the roles of *surfacing* and *zoetroping*. Wide-ranging as Thévenot's role in this reading is, we now wish to emphasise three features thereof, and how they relate to the consultancy literature.

(1) Duality, uncertainty and contemporary consultancy practice

This paper began in response to our puzzlement at the literature's representation of consultants' practices. We read repeatedly that consultants were bound up in one or other duality. They were both theorizing expert and pragmatist (Berglund and Werr, 2000; Wright et al., 2012); bearer of outside expertise, and inside knowledge (Sturdy et al., 2009); professional and confidant (Sturdy et al., 2006). We were left wondering: particularly given they seek employment from ostensibly certainty-seeking firms, why do consultants engage in such practices?

We began our answer by refining this somewhat fragmented account of consultants' dualities. We found in Thévenot's differentiation between planning and familiarity a distinction which encompassed the dualities noted elsewhere without being reducible to them. This proved both a parsimonious and powerful theorisation of these dualities. It helped identify the five practices described here, and how consultants navigate their multiple dualities.

Yet the question remained: why do consultants seeking corporate custom position themselves this way? The answer here lay in the uncertainties from which those customers suffered. Uncertainty has long been suggested as a reason companies hire consultants. But the types of uncertainty identified elsewhere – like globalization and increasing departmental independence – each explain only a subset of consultancy engagements (Fincham, 1999). The distinction between familiarity and planning integrates these diverse uncertainties into a single framework irreducible to any one of them. The difference between familiarity and planning entails the difference between command-and-control structures and lateral coordination (Ernst and Kieser, 2002), and between stability and turbulence (Fincham, 1999). But it is more than either of those: it is the tension between multiple modes of coordination, and multiple ways of evaluating organisations. Practices of *balancing*, *narrowing* and *deploying mediating forms* are oriented towards alleviating this tension. It is thus that these dual, transgressive practices

enable consultants to position themselves as saleable to firms suffering from such uncertainty. Of course, this implies nothing about whether they actually benefit those firms. Indeed, *surfacing* and *zoetroping* provide reasons to suspect that any relief from planned-familiar tensions is probably temporary. But it does answer the question with which we began: it is to engage with firms' uncertainties between familiarity and planning that consultants engage in such dual practices.

This answer relies on a recognition that consultants' duality is not simply a question of their position relative to organisational boundaries; personal-professional divides; or forms of knowledge. It extends to the nature of their agency. They operate both as the situated 'improviser' (Furusten, 2009) and the removed, rational planner. Some note similar dualities, but brand them 'paradoxical' (e.g. Berglund and Werr, 2000; Whittle, 2006). Others have avoided such 'paradox' by attributing planned and improvisatory forms of agency to different grades, divisions, or individuals (Canato and Giangreco, 2011; Waisberg and Nelson, 2018). But there is nothing 'contradictory' or problematic about one individual engaging different types of agency (Thévenot, 2007). Only by allowing for this can this study identify the tensions and resistance consultants experience, and the uncertainties they negotiate.

(2) A historically cogent account

Contemporary consultancy, with its emphasis on corporate strategy and change management, is a historically specific phenomenon. Yet many accounts of consultants' practices are oddly ahistorical. The factors to which they attribute the spread of contemporary consultancy practices – like their clients' susceptibility to discursive persuasion – were just as present long before its rise (Alvesson, 1993; Berglund and Werr, 2000). In answering the question 'why is this style of consultancy now so widespread?', they only raise the question 'why was it not so widespread then?'. This limitation pertains also to those who highlight an undifferentiated concept of 'uncertainty' to explain the organisational problems consultants address (Berglund and Werr, 2000; Clark and Salaman, 1998; Schuyt and Schuijt, 1998; Sturdy, 1997): given uncertainty is ubiquitous in organisations, why are contemporary consultants a relatively recent phenomenon (Thévenot, 2001a)?

It is therefore important that our account of consultants' practices not only explains consultants' engagement in them, but does so in a historically cogent way. If these

practices are popular because they address planned-familiar uncertainty, their spread should coincide with that uncertainty's development. Sure enough, we see contemporary consultancy rise around the 1960s (Kipping, 1999; Wright, 2000), when 'new management' became prominent (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Jessop, 1993). As Fordist hierarchies (planning) were complemented by more interpersonal ways of organising (familiarity), organisations faced increasing uncertainty about what constituted 'good organising'. Consultancy rose alongside the uncertainty between familiarity and planning (Thévenot, 2007).

This spread was not uniform. While consultancy became prominent in private sector bodies during the 1960s, the public sector did not immediately follow suit. Instead, it was during the new public management reforms of the 1980s that Governments increasingly drew on consultancy (Saint-Martin, 1998). These were the very reforms which brought 'new management' into the public sector. In private and public sectors alike, consultancy rose alongside new management – and planned-familiar uncertainty. Thus our account of consultants as addressing this uncertainty is not only validated by observed practices, it is also historically cogent.

(3) Identifying consultants' practices, and the resistance they face

Others have previously highlighted practices in which consultants are involved. These can be revealing to those interested in how consultants operationalise knowledge, or persuasively 'perform' as skilled professionals. Yet they tend to emphasise one or other particular element of consultants' work (e.g. Sturdy et al., 2006; Whittle, 2006), rather than attempting a broad account of the practices of consultants and those around them. Consequently, they provide limited pictures of consultancy engagements, which do not capture the tensions so palpable in this study's empirical material. The practices and interrelations illustrated in Figure 3 capture this dynamic.

This study thus complements existing insights into specific areas of consultancy work with a broader model of their practice. Most importantly, this model incorporates an understanding of the resistance consultants' activities receive. In particular, it highlights the *mediating forms* consultants deploy as likely sites of this resistance. It thus offers predictive power not offered elsewhere in the literature on consultants' practices: with a knowledge of a consultancy engagement and the

mediating forms deployed therein, we can identify the likely nature and sites of this resistance.

Among such phenomena, we highlight *zoetroping*, a form of resistance not previously remarked upon. It involves a rapid proliferation of forms precipitating awareness of those forms' transience and artifice: people see both a static, taken-for-granted form and an unstable succession of ways people choose to measure success. Thévenot theorises these different orientations to forms as having one's eyes respectively 'closed' and 'open' to their arbitrariness.

Thévenot describes 'blinking', a state in which cognisant actors – particularly those involved in constructing forms – adopt both perspectives at once. But in *zoetroping*, the effect is not one of simultaneously, crisply viewing both sides of a form. In *zoetroping*, one blurrily apprehends objects one treats as real rushing past, creating the impression of instability. This phenomenon is not observed elsewhere in the regimes of engagement literature, but relates closely to its preoccupation with forms and their associated social dynamics.

Conclusions

This paper was motivated by an attempt to explain consultants' engagement in a variety of dual, uncertain practices (Czarniawska and Mazza, 2003). Given their reliance on repeat business from certainty-seeking firms, their positioning themselves in this uncertain manner was not immediately intuitive. Theorising organisations' uncertainties and consultants' dualities through Thévenot's regimes of engagement revealed both to relate to the tension between familiarity and planning. Analysing consultants' practices from this perspective highlights their dual practices as means of engaging with organisations' uncertainties by holding together these regimes of engagement.

This answer progresses research on consultancy practices in three ways. First, it theorises how these practices' duality relates to the organisational problems consultants engage with. Second, it links observational evidence of these practices to an historically cogent explanation of their popularity. Third, it models these practices and the resistance they face, helping us anticipate the likely site and nature of this resistance in consultancy engagements.

Each of these advances is made possible by an underlying contribution: the use of Thévenot to more parsimoniously and integratively account for consultants' various

dualities and organisations' historically developing uncertainties. This parsimony and integration enables studies like this one to bring together phenomena previously considered distinctly. Through Thévenot's framework, we can relate consultants' various dualities to organisations' uncertainties between planning and familiarity. Most importantly, Thévenot marks this uncertainty as historically specific, enabling us also to draw together the otherwise distinct literatures on consultants' practices and their historical rise. This takes us a small step closer to an integrative theory of management consultancy as a phenomenon.

This paper uses Thévenot's theory to advance consultancy research. But zoetroping is a phenomenon of wider interest to regimes of engagement scholars. It identifies a superfluity of new forms as a possible reason why actors may find their eyes at once open and closed to forms' arbitrariness. In a world increasingly replete with new forms (Breviglieri, 2018), this phenomenon seems unlikely to be limited to consultancy engagements.

These developments suggest further research. First, we note that consultants seem to have a talent for moving between regimes. Yet we do not yet know why, or what other occupational groups may be similar. Further research could replicate our use of Thévenot's lens to consider other professions and roles, particularly those characteristic of Post-Fordist capitalism, like freelancers and management gurus. Second, this paper does not attempt to comprehensively analyse consultancy's history. Therefore, while our account is compatible with this history, it can only point to one potential reason for consultants' rise. Further work could consider consultants' practices alongside other identified reasons for their popularity, like their ability to plan, organize and legitimize the outsourcing of labour (Hyman, 2018). Finally, while we identify zoetroping, we know neither the breadth of environments in which it arises, nor its wider consequences. Studies of environments in which many new forms are often created, like standards agencies, or regulatory bodies, could interrogate this further.

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Appendix VI: Collective firms between collective and company - Summary

This thesis wants to understand how alternative firms deal with the complexity of balancing different rationalities in their intraorganizational coordination, in the absence of formal hierarchies. In a comparative case study of three small, democratically governed collective firms, the relationship between coordination and morality is analyzed. The majority of research on collective firms focuses on democratic governance structures, which risks to underestimate the importance of coordination that is based on intimate knowledge and personal relations. This is especially important to understand collective firms, which are dependent on lateral accountability and cooperation between their members. Consequently, this work is informed by the work of Laurent Thévenot which allows to understand coordination based on different levels of generalization.

The results of this thesis contribute to three different areas of research:

First, contributions are made to the field of valuation studies, by further developing insights on the notion of the test. The thesis also points out the central role of legitimate principles of difference and equivalence for successful commensuration, and the tension between particularity and generalization in standardizing evaluation devices.

Second, the study contributes insights for scholarship on coordination and morality in organizations. It demonstrates that considering coordination based on different degrees of generality yields important insights on intraorganizational coordination.

Finally, this study contributes to scholarship on cooperatives and collectivist organizations. The often noted duality of collective firms is reframed as the need to balance and mediate different modes of coordination. The study develops a heuristic concept, the composite relation, which explains how collectives are held together despite their central tension between particular and collective goods.

Appendix VII: Kollektivbetriebe zwischen Gemeinschaft und Unternehmen - Zusammenfassung

Das zentrale Forschungsinteresse dieser Arbeit ist zu verstehen, was es bedeutet gleichzeitig eine Gemeinschaft und ein Unternehmen zu sein, und welche Herausforderungen dadurch für die intraorganisationale Koordination entstehen. Die Arbeit interessiert sich dafür, wie alternative Betriebe unterschiedliche Menschen und Rationalitäten miteinander vereinbaren, ohne auf formale Hierarchien zurückzugreifen. In einer vergleichende Fallstudie von drei kleinen, direkt-demokratisch organisierten Kollektivbetrieben wird der Beziehung zwischen Koordination, Bewertung und Moralvorstellungen nachgegangen.

Die Mehrheit der Forschungsarbeiten, die sich mit Kollektivbetrieben beschäftigen, fokussiert auf das Design und die Aufrechterhaltung von demokratischen Governance-Strukturen. Ein solcher Fokus läuft Gefahr, die Bedeutung von intimen Wissen und persönlichen Beziehungen für Koordination zu unterschätzen. Dies ist besonders wichtig, um Kollektivbetriebe zu verstehen, die auf gegenseitige Verantwortlichkeit und Kooperation zwischen ihren Mitgliedern angewiesen sind. Dementsprechend basiert diese Arbeit auf Laurent Thévenots pragmatischer Soziologie des Engagements. Diese ermöglicht es Koordination zu analysieren, die auf unterschiedlichen Graden von Generalisierung basiert.

Die Ergebnisse der Arbeit liefern einen Beitrag zu drei Forschungsbereichen:

Die Arbeit liefert einen Beitrag zum Feld der „valuation studies“. Es wird gezeigt, dass die mit Bewertung verbundene Unsicherheit zu Prozessen führen kann, die mehr einer kollektiven Entdeckung, als einem Konflikt zwischen unterschiedlichen Werten entsprechen. Darüber hinaus wird die zentrale Rolle von legitimen Differenzierungs- und Äquivalenzprinzipien für Kommensuration aufgezeigt, sowie die Spannung zwischen Partikularität und Generalisierung in standardisierten Bewertungsinstrumenten.

Die Arbeit liefert einen Beitrag zur Forschung zum Verhältnis von Koordination, Bewertung und Moralvorstellungen in Organisationen. Sie zeigt, dass ein theoretischer Rahmen, der unterschiedliche Grade der Generalisierung von Koordination beachtet, wichtige Erkenntnisse für das Verständnis intraorganisationaler Koordination liefert.

Die Arbeit liefert einen Beitrag zur Forschung über Kollektivbetriebe und Genossenschaften. Indem die eingenommene Perspektive über die Analyse von Governance-Strukturen hinausgeht, wird die Dualität von Kollektivbetrieben als ein Problem der Balance zwischen unterschiedlichen Koordinationsmodi gerahmt. Aus dieser Perspektive ist die zentrale Spannung, die Kollektivbetriebe ausbalancieren müssen, eine zwischen auf Vertrautheit basierender Koordination und Koordination, die auf Generalisierung von Beziehungen beruht. Die Arbeit entwickelt das heuristisches Konzept der Kompositions-Beziehung, die erklärt, wie Kollektivbetriebe zwischen partikulären und kollektiven Gütern vermitteln.